



# FLORENCE

THROUGH ENGLISH AND AMERICAN EYES

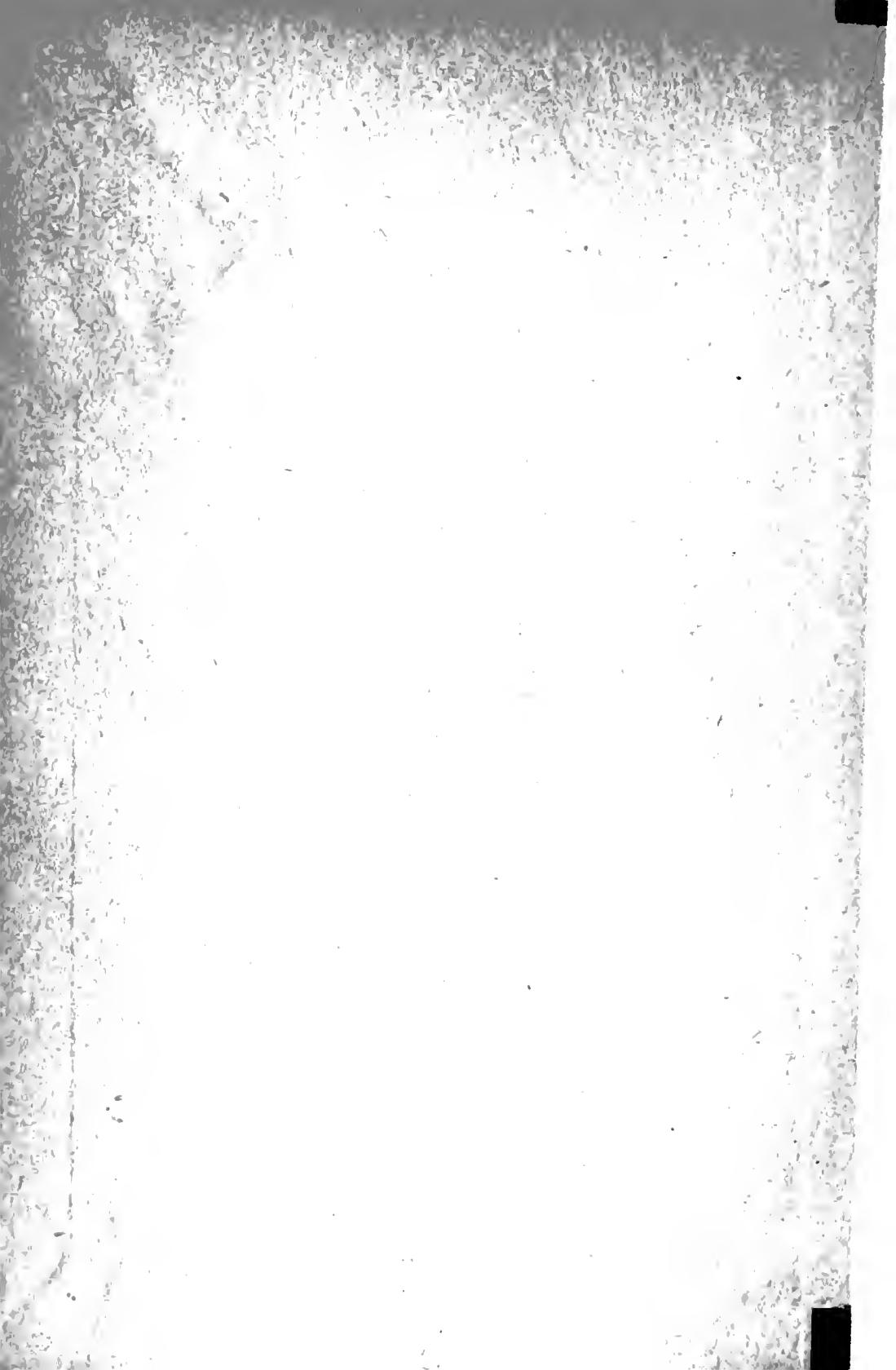
16 ORIGINAL LITHOGRAPHS

BY DARIO BETTI

GONNELLI  
FLORENCE

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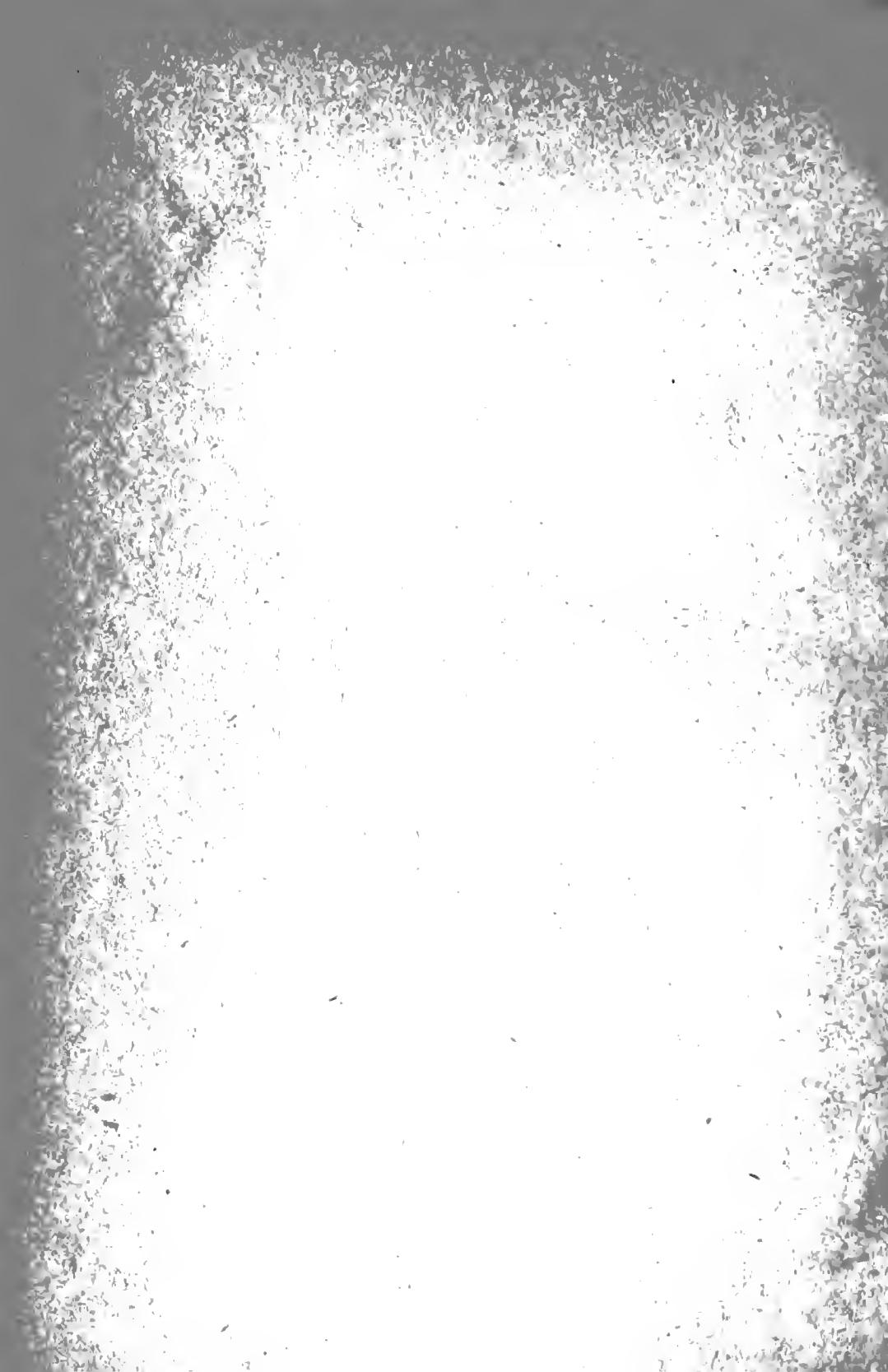




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*Happy is England! I could be content  
To see no other verdure than its own;*

*Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment  
For skies Italian....*

JOHN KEATS

# FLORENCE

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16 ORIGINAL LITHOGRAPHS

BY DARIO BETTI

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GONNELLI

FLORENCE

In the same collection: **Venice, Rome, Naples**  
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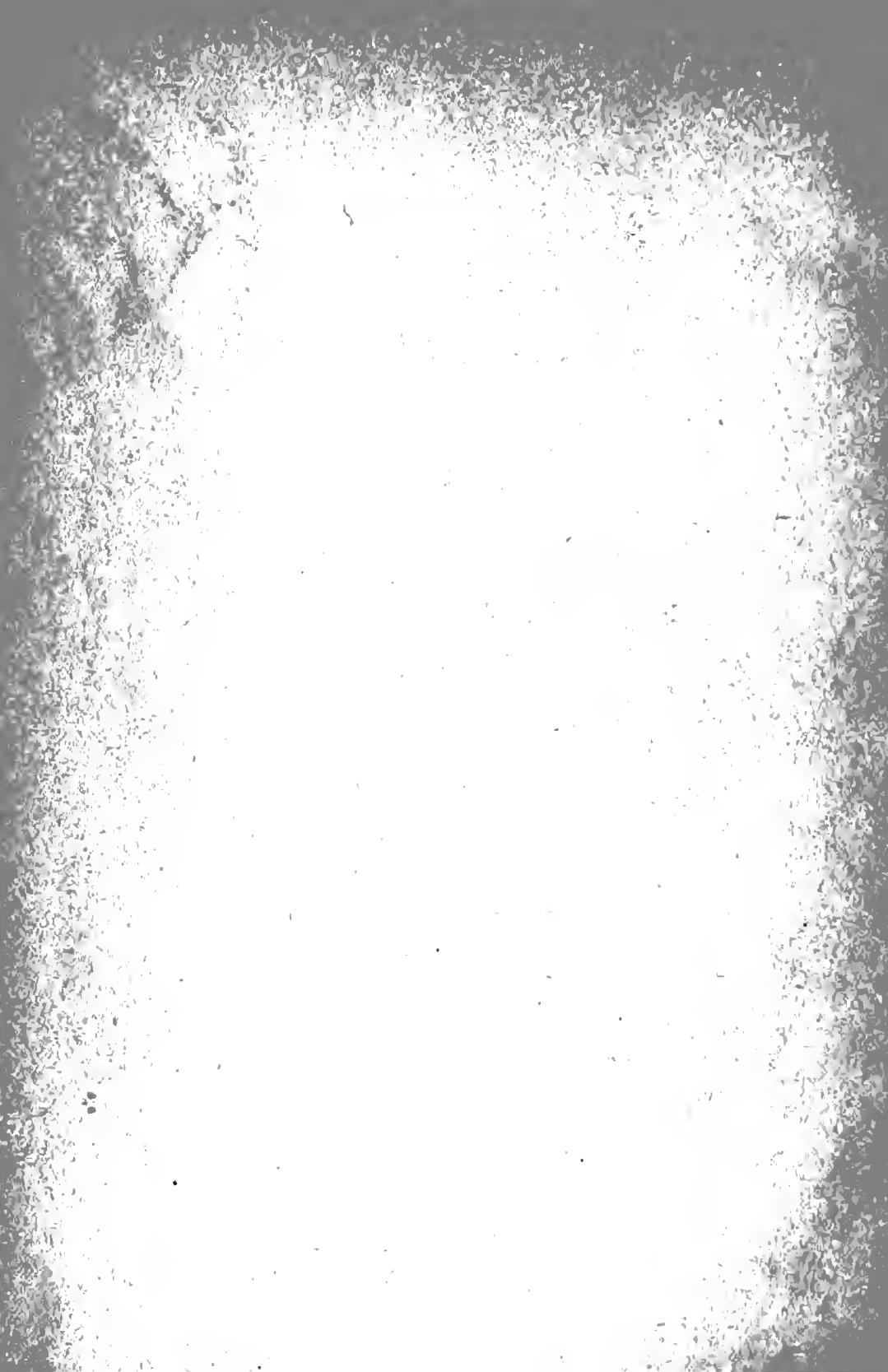
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## VIEWS OF FLORENCE

*On the cover:* Houses on the Arno  
Towers and domes  
A view from Boboli Gardens and Pitti Palace  
The Baptistry and the Gate of Heaven  
The Duomo (Santa Maria del Fiore)  
Giotto's Tower  
The Bargello (now National Museum)  
Palazzo Vecchio and Piazza della Signoria  
The Uffizi  
Fiesole  
San Lorenzo, the Medici Chapel and Laurentian Library  
The Ponte Vecchio and the houses on the Arno  
Villa di Bellosguardo  
Santa Croce and Dante's monument  
Santa Maria Novella  
Dante's house and the "Torre della Castagna"  
Piazza della Sanissima Annunziata and Ferdinando de 'Medici' statue

## ENGLISH AND AMERICAN WRITERS MENTIONED IN THIS VOLUME

Barrett-Browning Elizabeth  
Berenson Bernard  
Browning Robert  
Byron George Gordon  
Carlyle Oscar  
Coleridge Samuel Taylor  
Dickens Charles  
Eliot George  
Emerson Ralph Waldo  
Hawthorne Nathaniel  
James Henry  
Keats John  
Landor Walter Savage  
Lawrence David Herbert  
Longfellow Henry Wadsworth  
Mansfield Katherine  
Oliphant Margaret  
Rogers Samuel  
Ruskin John  
Symonds John Addington  
Trollope Frances



## TOWERS AND DOMES

**C**anto, dal mio buon popol non inteso,  
E'l bel Tamigi cangio col bell'Arno.

I sing and my good people hear me not  
Though dear the Thames no less is Arno dear.

**J. Milton, Third Italian Sonnet**

But how much beauty of another kind is here, when on a fair clear morning, we look, from the summit of a hill, on Florence!

See where it lies before us in a sun-lighted valley, bright with the winding Arno, and shut in by swelling hills; its domes and towers and palaces, rising from the glittering country in a glittering heap, and shining in the sun like gold!

Magnificently stern and sombre are the streets of Florence; and the strong old piles of building make such heaps of shadow on the ground and in the river, that there is another and different city of rich forms and fancies, always lying at our feet. Prodigious palaces constructed for defence....

What light is shed upon the world, at this day, from these rugged palaces of Florence! Here, open to all comers in their beautiful and calm retreats, the ancient Sculptors are immortal side by side with Michael Angelo, Canova, Titian, Rembrandt, Raphael; Poets, Historians, Philosophers — those illustrious men of history beside whom its crowned heads and harnessed warriors show so poor and small, and are so soon forgotten.

Here the imperishable part of noble minds survives, placid and equal,... Let us look back on Florence while we may, and when its shining Dome is seen no more, go travelling through cheerful Tuscany, with a bright remembrance of it; for Italy will be the fairer for the recollection....

**Charles Dickens, Pictures from Italy**

The name of Florence had been growing prouder and prouder in all the courts of Europe, nay in Africa itself, on the strength of purest gold coinage, finest dyes and textures, pre-eminent scholarship and poetic genius, and wits of the most serviceable sort for statemanship and banking; it was a name so omnipresent that a Pope with a turn for epigram had called Florentines « the fifth element »

**George Eliot, Romola**

It is noticeable that where the Roman-Etruscan blood was purest probably from mixture, in the valley of the Arno, the modern Italian genius founds its home. Florence and her sisters cities formed the language and the arts of Italy. To this race in conjunction with the natives of Lombardy and central Italy, was committed the civilisation of Europe in the fifteenth century.... In order to comprehend the greatness of this Italian type in the Renaissance, it is only needful to study the picture galleries of Florence and of Venice with special attention to the portraits they contain.

**J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy***

The great Florentine artists, as we have seen, were, with scarcely an exception, bent upon rendering the material significance of visible things.

....At last appeared the man who was the pupil of nobody, the heir of everybody, who felt profoundly and powerfully what to his precursors had been vague instinct, who saw and expressed the meaning of it all. The seed that produced him had already flowered into a Giotto, and once again into a Masaccio; in him, the last of his race, born in conditions artistically most propitious, all the energies remaining in his stock were concentrated, and in him, Florentine art had its logical culmination. Michelangiolo had a sense for the materially significant as great as Giotto's or Masaccio's, but he possessed means of rendering, —inherited from Donatello, Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio and Leonardo,— means that had been undreamt of by Giotto or even by Masaccio.

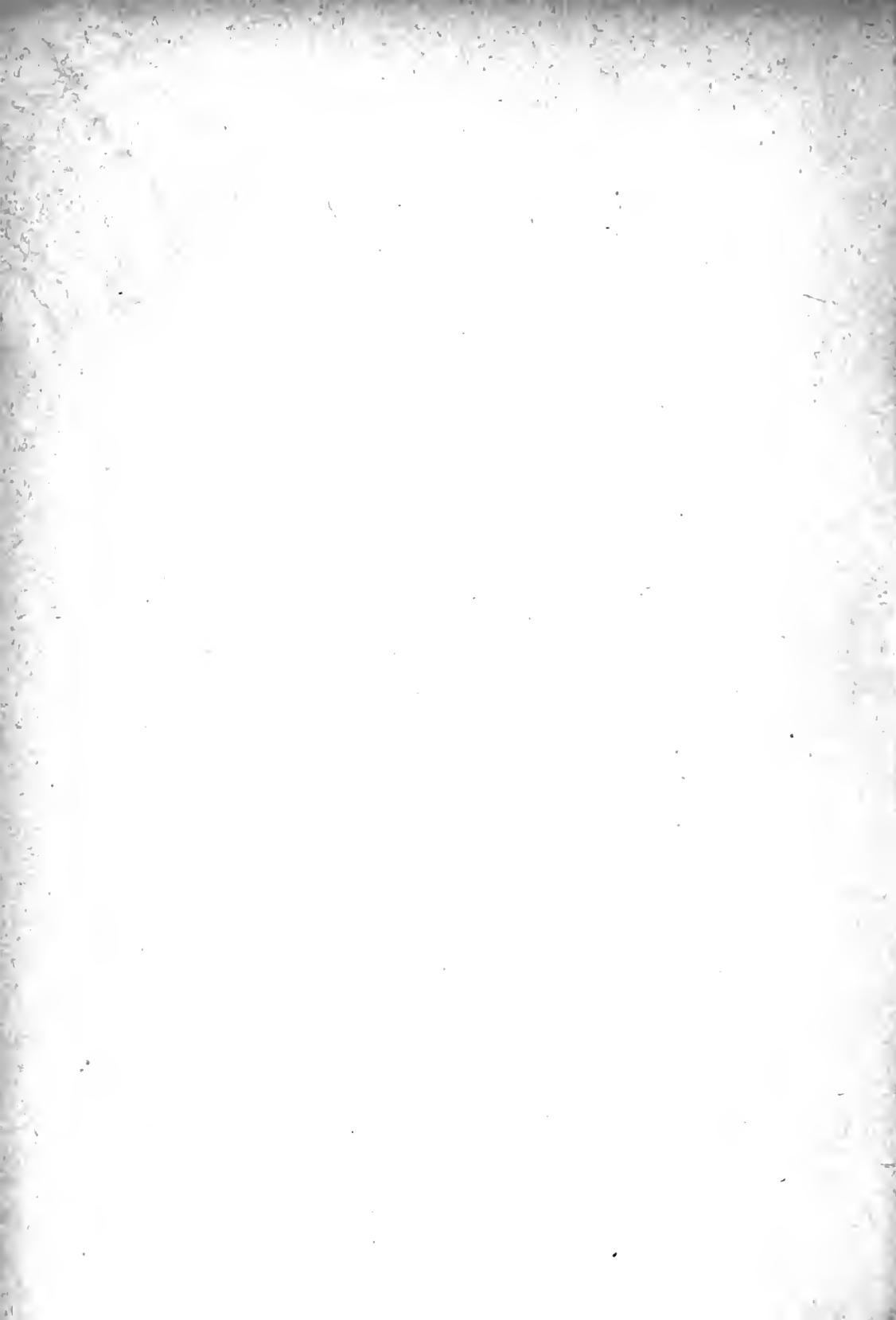
**Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters***

O lady! when I left the shore,  
The distant shore which gave me birth,  
I hardly thought to grieve once more  
To quit another spot on earth:  
Yet here, amidst this barren isle,  
Where panting nature droops the head,  
Where only thou art seen to smile,  
I view my parting hour with dread... **Byron, *To Florence***

Mr. Osmond talked of Florence, of Italy, of the pleasure of living in that country. It was very dull sometimes, but there were advantages in living in the country which contains the most beauty. There were certain impressions that one could get only in Italy.

**Henry James, *The Portrait of a lady***





## A VIEW FROM BOBOLI GARDENS AND PITTI PALACE

Of all the fairest Cities of the Earth  
none is so fair as FLORENCE. 'Tis a gem  
Of purest ray; and what a light broke forth,  
When it emerged from darkness! Search within,  
Without; all is enchantment! 'Tis the Past  
Contending with the Present; and in turn  
Each has the mastery.

**Samuel Rogers, Italy**

I hardly think there can be a place in the world where life is more delicious for its own simple sake than here.

*June 10 th. 1858* — From the gallery the Uffizi I went into the Boboli Gardens, which are contiguous to the palace; but found them too sunny for enjoyment. They seem to consist partly of a wilderness; but the portion into which I strayed was laid with straight walks, lined with high box-hedges, along which there was only a narrow margin of shade. I saw an amphitheatre, with a wide sweep of marble seat around it, enclosing a grassy space, where, doubtless, the Medici may have witnessed splendid spectacles.....

My wife and I went to the Pitti Palace to-day; and first entered a court where, yesterday, she had seen a carpet of flowers, arranged for some great ceremony.

It fills a great many stately halls, which themselves are well worth a visit for the architecture and frescoes; only these matters become commonplace after travelling through a mile or two of them. The collection of pictures as well for their number as for the celebrity and excellence of many of them is the most interesting that I have seen, and I do not yet feel in a condition, nor perhaps ever shall, to speak of a single one. It gladdened my very heart to find that they were not darkened out of sight, nor apparently at all injured by time, but were well kept and varnished, brilliantly framed, and, no doubt, restored by skilful touches if any of them needed it.

The most beautiful picture in the world, I am convinced, is Raphael's « *Madonna della Seggiola* ». I was familiar with it in a hundred engravings and copies, and therefore it shone upon me as with a familiar beauty, though infinitely more divine than I had ever seen before.

**Nathaniel Hawthorne, French and Italian Note-Books**

....Florence is full of great people, so called, from England, and the real sommités are coming, such as Alfred Tennyson, and, with an interval, Dickens and Thackeray. The two latter go to Rome for the winter, I understand.

Do you say Edward Lytton? But he isn't Edward Lytton now-he is Robert (1853).

**Elisabeth Barrett-Browning, Letters**

Perhaps I have never felt this fever of anticipation more strongly than in approaching Florence. How much of what has embellished my early years had its origin from thence!...

I almost felt as if I was going to enter bodily into the presence of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.... as if the great Cosmo, would be staring me full in the face and Lorenzo exhibited in all his splendour before me.

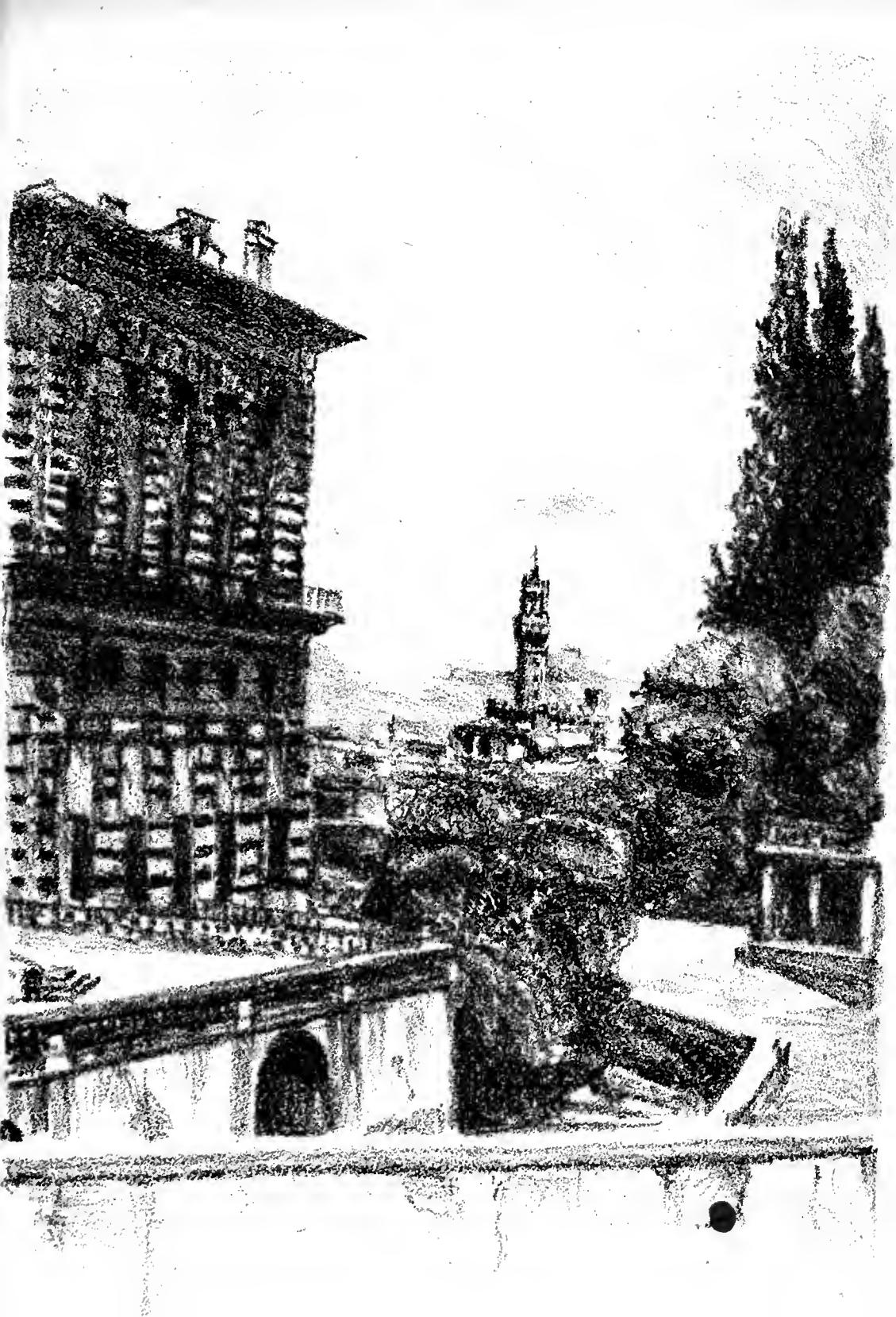
**Mrs. Trollope, A visit to Italy**

Lawrence wrote me from Florence. He said Florence was lovely and full of "extremely nice people".

**Katherine Mansfield, Letters**

With old Boccaccio's soul I stand possest,  
And breathe an air like life, that swells my chest.  
The brightness of the world, O thou once free,  
And always fair, rare land of courtesy!  
O Florence! with the Tuscan fields and hills,  
And famous Arno, fed with all their rills;  
Thou brightest star of star-bright Italy!  
Rich, ornate, populous, all treasures thine,  
The golden corn, the olive, and the vine.  
Fair cities, gallant mansions, castles old  
And forests. . . . .  
Palladian palace with its storied halls;  
Fountains, where Love lies listening to their falls;  
Gardens, where flings the bridge its airy span,  
And Nature makes her happy home with man;

**Samuel T. Coleridge, The Garden of Boccaccio**



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## THE BAPTISTERY AND "THE GATE OF HEAVEN"

Set this little bit of geography, and architectural fact, well into your mind. There is the little octagon Baptistry in the middle; here, ten minutes' walk east of it, the Franciscan church of the Holy Cross, there, five minutes walk west of it, the Dominican church of St. Mary. Now, that little octagon Baptistry stood where it now stands (and was finished, though the roof has been altered since) in the eighth century. It is the central building of Etrurian Christianity,— of European Christianity.

Forty years ago, there was assuredly no spot of ground, out of Palestine, in all the round world, on which if you knew, even but a little, the true course of that world's history, you saw with so much joyful reverence the dawn of morning, as at the foot of the tower of Giotto. For there the traditions of faith and hope; of both the Gentile and Jewish race met for their beautiful labour: the Baptistry of Florence is the last building raised on the earth by the descendants of the workmen taught by Daedalus and the Tower of Giotto is the loveliest raised on earth under the inspiration of the men who lifted up the tabernacle in the wilderness. Of living Greek work there is none after the Florentine Baptistry; of living Christian work, none so perfect as the Tower of Giotto; and, under the gleam and shadows of their marbles, the morning light was haunted by the ghosts of the Father of Natural Science, Galileo: of Sacred Art, Angelico, and the Master of Sacred Song.

**John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence***

Sit thee down awhile;

Then, by the gates so marvellously wrought,  
That they might serve to be the gates of Heaven,  
Enter the Baptistry. That place he loved,  
Loved as his own; (1) and in his visits there  
Well might he take delight! Samuel Rogers.

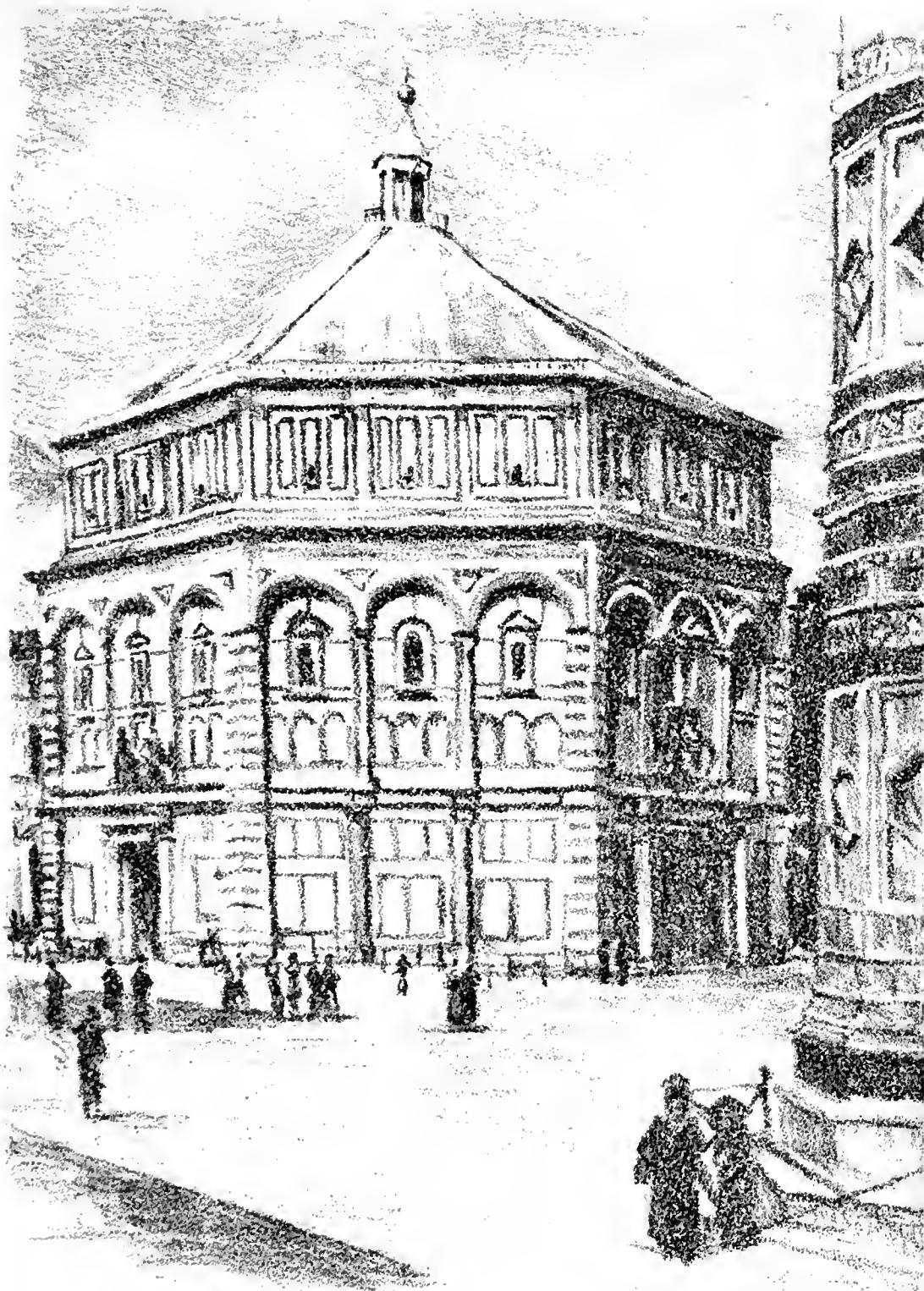
Samuel Rogers, *Florence*

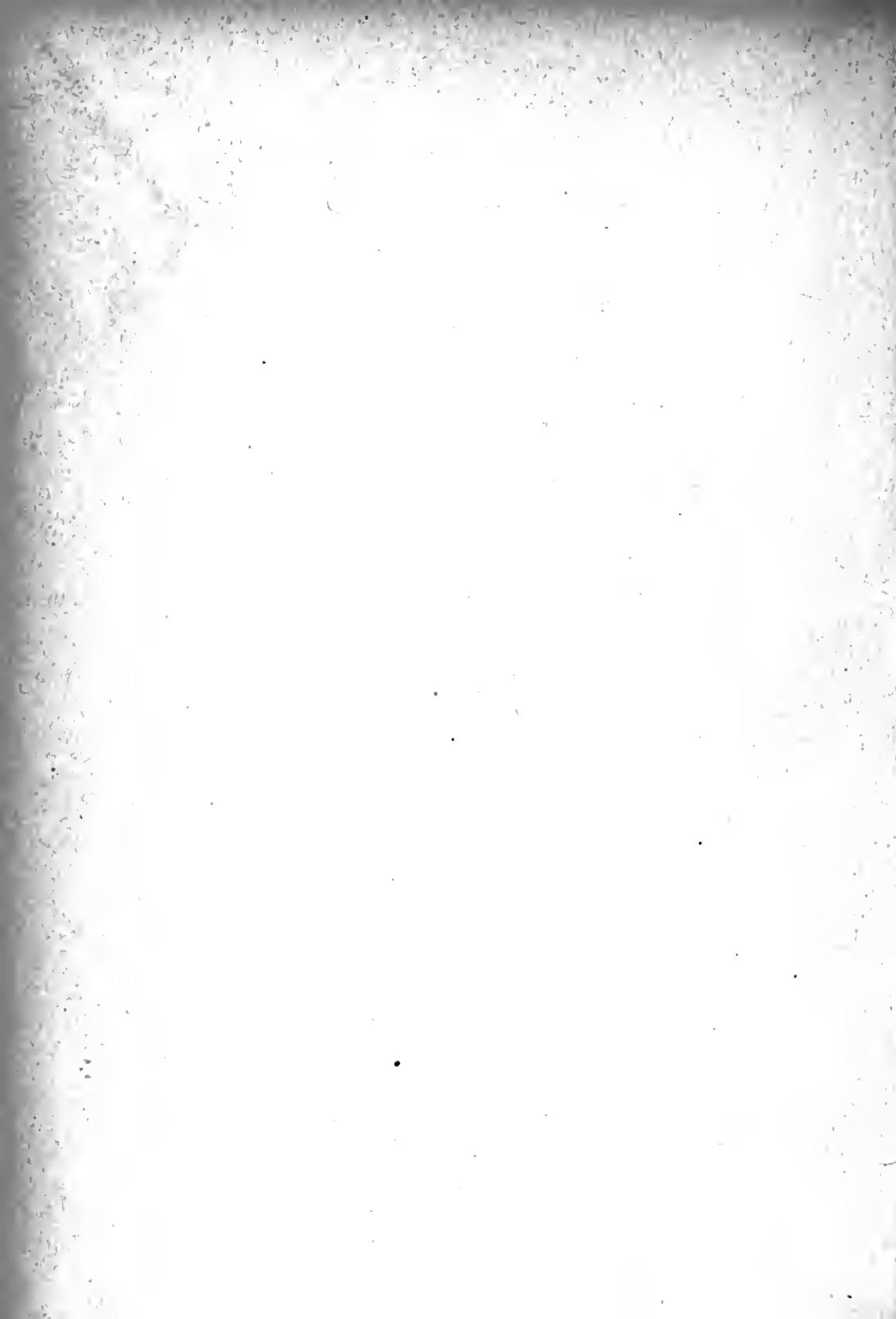
And the reader does not need to be reminded that when the gates of the Baptistry were finally set up after these long years, to the wonder and delight of a succeeding generation, another young artist, Michel of the Buonarroti, with that fine mouthing speech of his, magniloquent and generous, declared them fit to be the gates of heaven.

This great work was followed in Florentine art-history by another still greater; the construction of the great cupola of the Cathedral.

Mrs. Oliphant, *The Makers of Florence*

(1) Dante, in the "Inferno", says "...il mio bel San Giovanni".





## THE DUOMO (S. Maria del Fiore)

Well—but here we are at Florence, the most beautiful of the cities devised by man....

In the meanwhile I have seen the Venus, I have seen the divine Raphaels. I have stood by Michael Angelo's tomb in Santa Croce. I have looked at the wonderful Duomo. This cathedral! After all, the elaborate grace of the Pisan cathedral is one thing, and the massive grandeur of this of Florence is another and better thing; it struck me with a sense of the sublime in architecture. At Pisa we say, 'How beautiful!' here we say nothing; it is enough if we can breathe. The mountainous marble masses overcome as we look up—we feel the weight of them on the soul. Tesselated marbles (the green treating its elaborate pattern into the dim yellow, which seems the general hue of the structure) climb against the sky, self-crowned with that prodigy of marble domes. It struck me as a wonder in architecture. I had neither seen nor imagined the like of it in any way. It seemed to carry its theology out with it; it signified more than a mere building (1847, to H. S. Boyd)

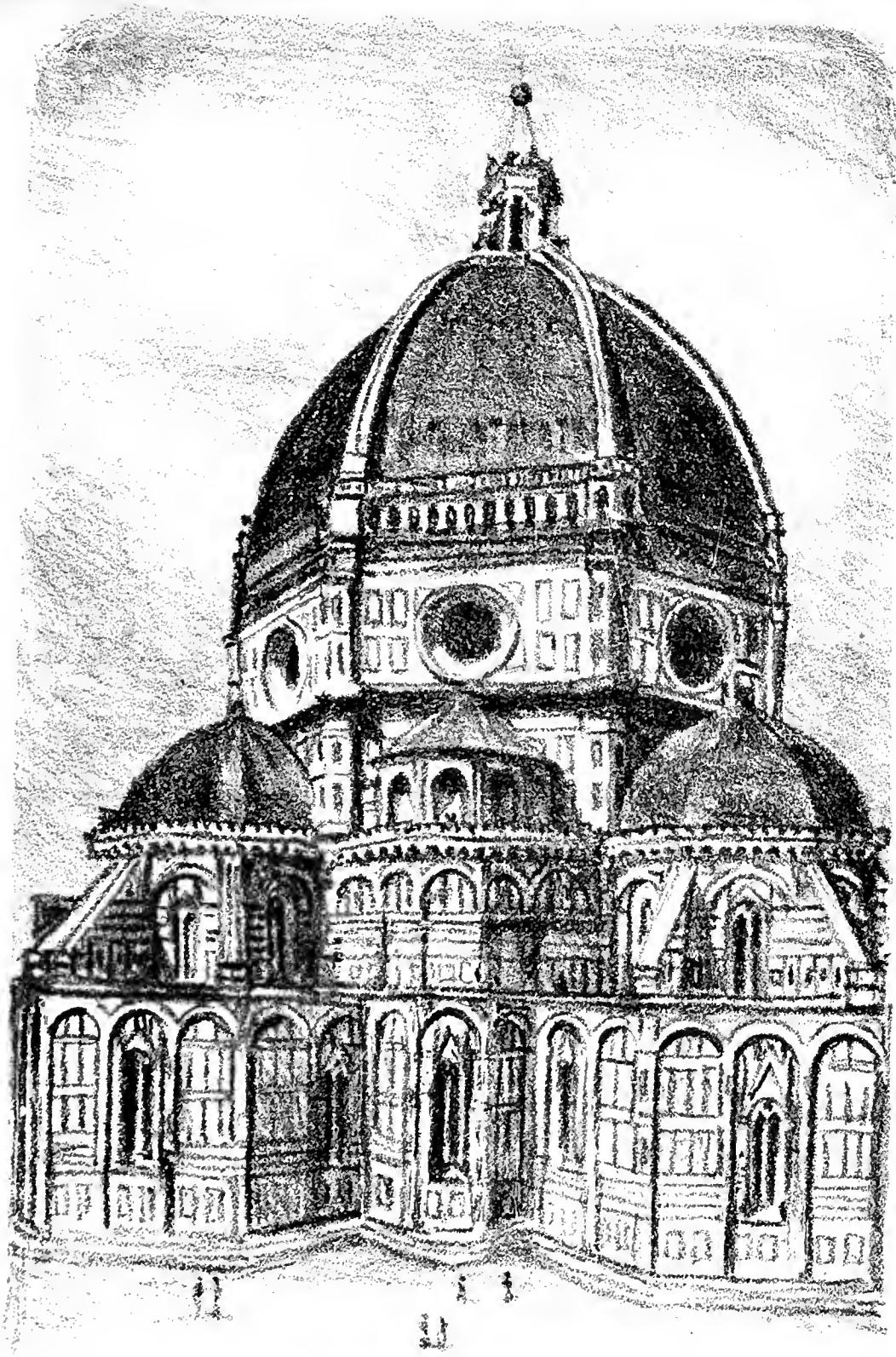
**Elisabeth Barrett-Browning, Letters**

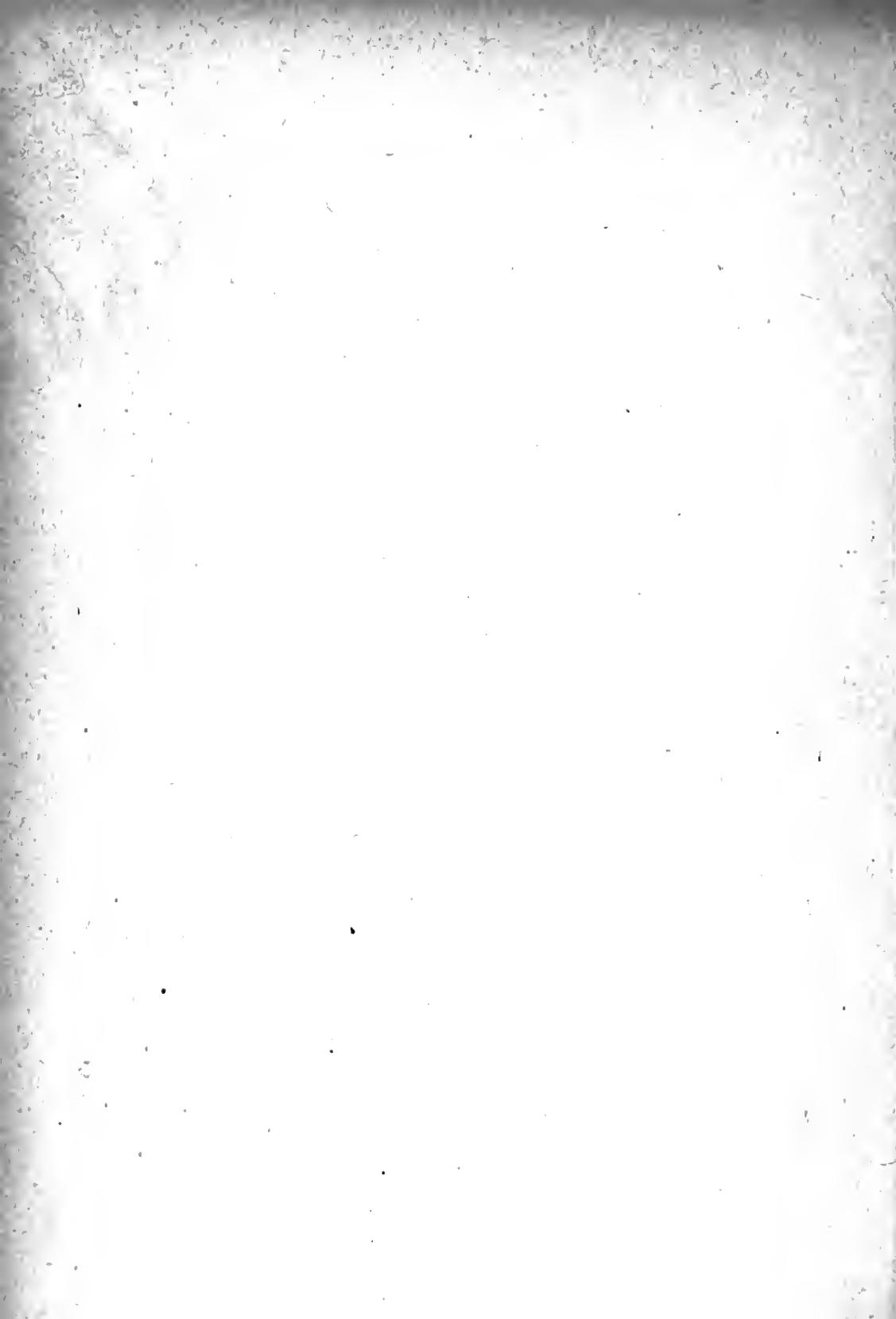
Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,  
Sober, expurgate, spare of an « issimo. »)  
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan.  
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.  
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia  
The Campanile, the Duomo's, fit ally,  
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,  
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold  
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire  
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled  
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire  
As, « God and the People » plain for its motto,  
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?  
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto  
And Florence together, the first am I!

**Robert Browning, *Old Pictures in Florence***

....the dome which suggested to Michael Angelo the idea of that of  
St. Peter's, and which, with the exception of its eclipsing offspring,  
stands unrivalled in the world.... **Mrs. Trollope, *A visit to Italy***





## GIOTTO'S TOWER

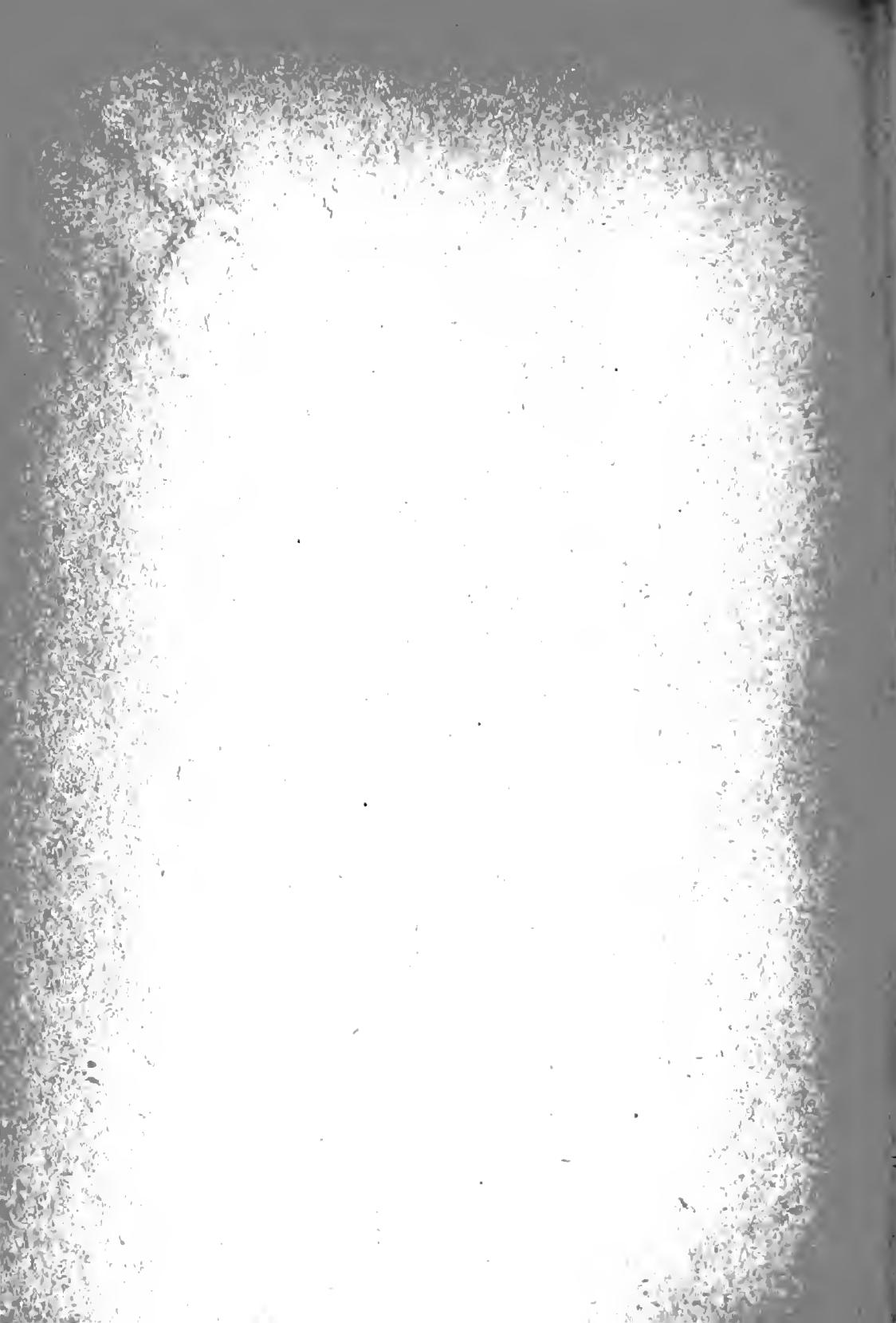
How many lives, made beautiful and sweet  
By self-devotion and by self-restraint,  
Whose pleasure is to run without complaint  
On unknown errands of the Paraclete,  
Wanting the reverence of unshodden feet,  
Fail of the nimbus which the artists paint  
Around the shining forehead of the saint,  
And are in their completeness incomplete!  
In the old Tuscan town stands Giotto's Tower,  
The lily of Florence blossoming in stone, —  
A vision, a delight, and a desire, —  
The builder's perfect and centennial flower,  
That in the nights of ages bloomed alone,  
But wanting still the glory of the spire.

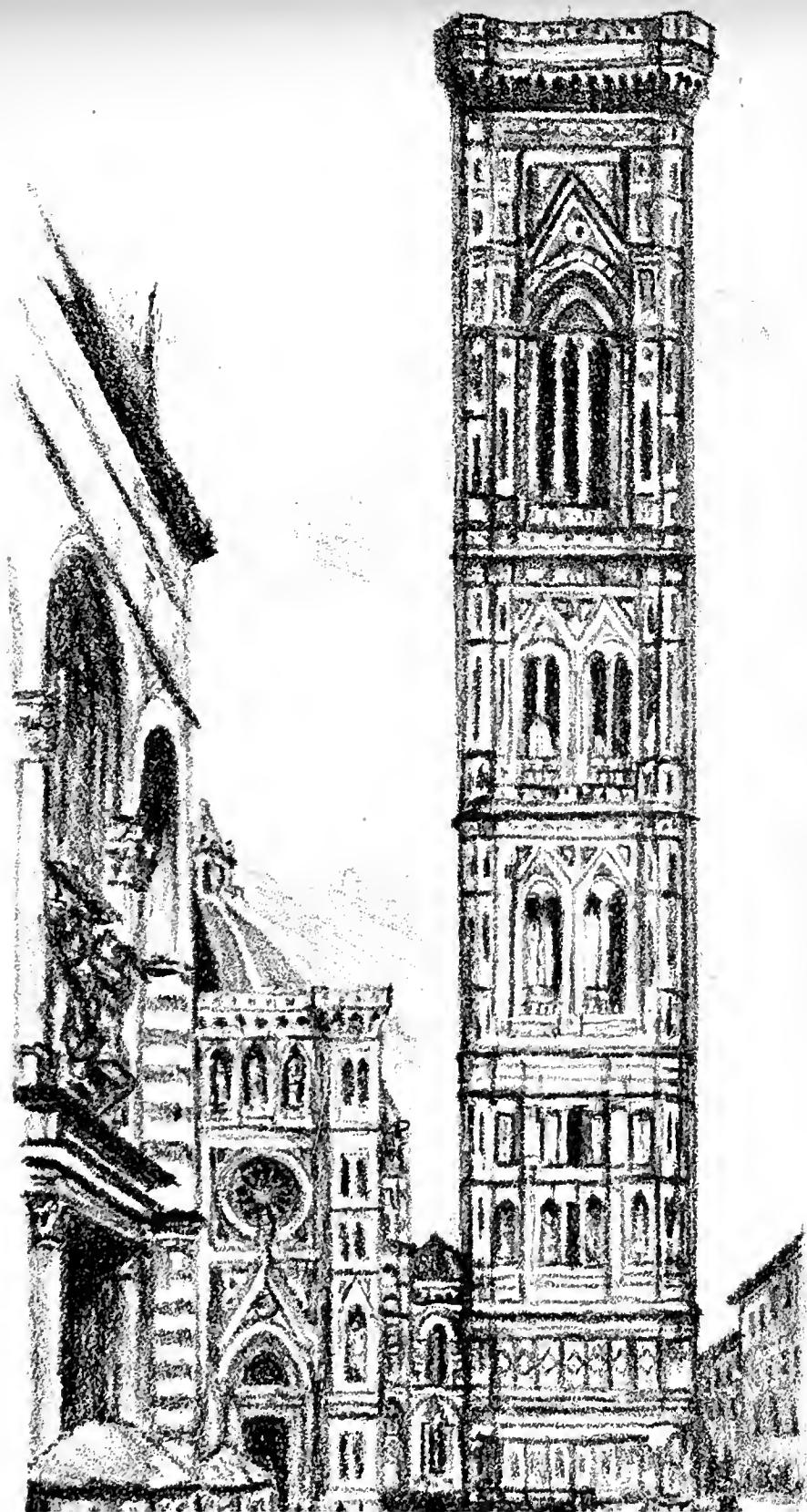
H. W. Longfellow, *Giotto's Tower*  
*in "Flower-de-Luce"*

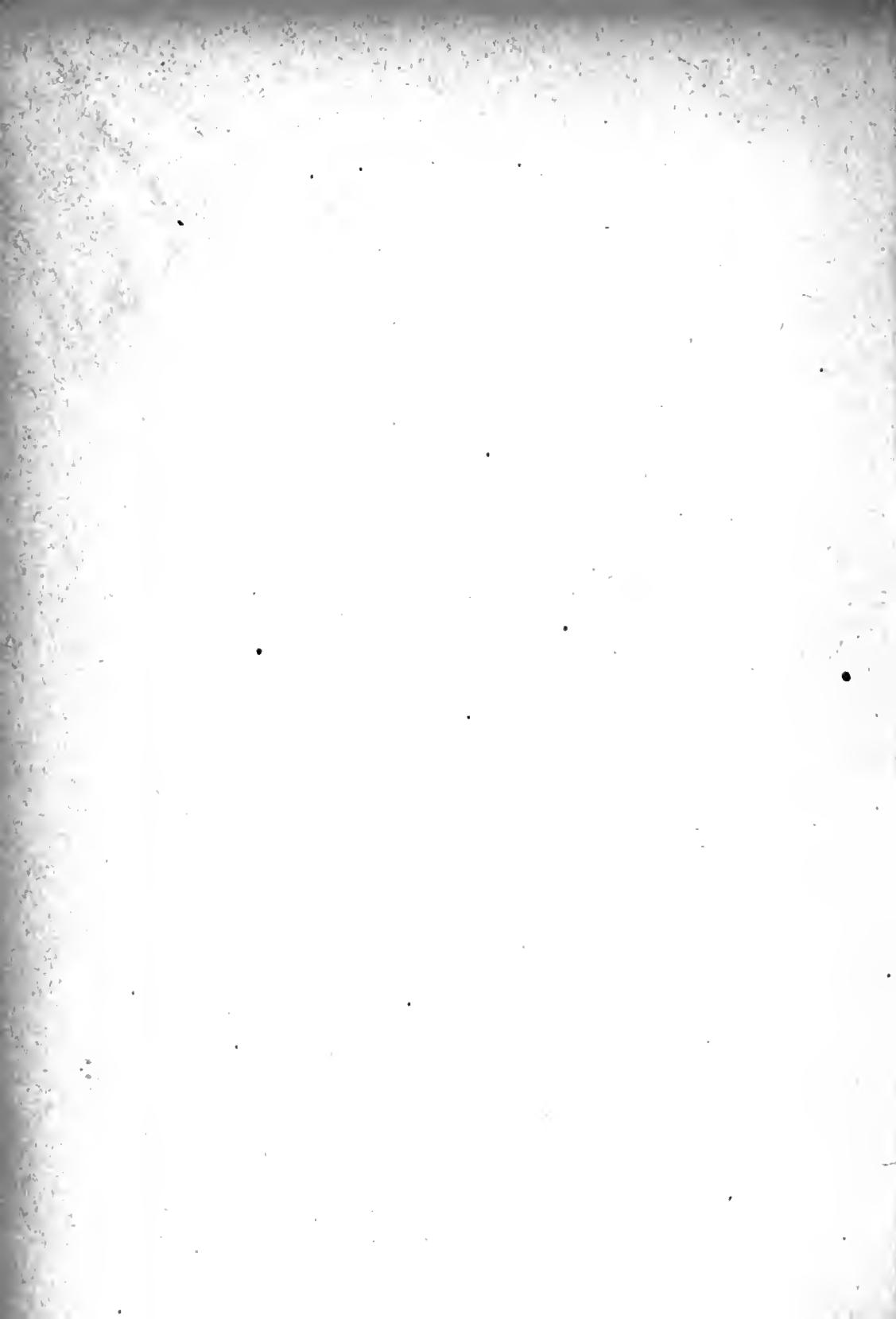
The Cathedral, the Palazzo Pubblico, the two great churches of Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella, all leaped into being within a few years, almost simultaneously. The Duomo was founded, as some say, in 1296, the same year in which Santa Croce was begun, or, according to others, in 1298, and between these two dates, in 1296 the Palace of the Signoria, the seat of the Commonwealth, the centre of all public life, had its commencement. All these great buildings Arnolfo designed and began, and his genius requires no other evidence....

Giotto, the second name in the history of Art in Florence, as also in the building of Santa Maria del Fiore, is a much more recognisable man than his predecessors either in painting or architecture.

Mrs. Oliphant, *The Makers of Florence*







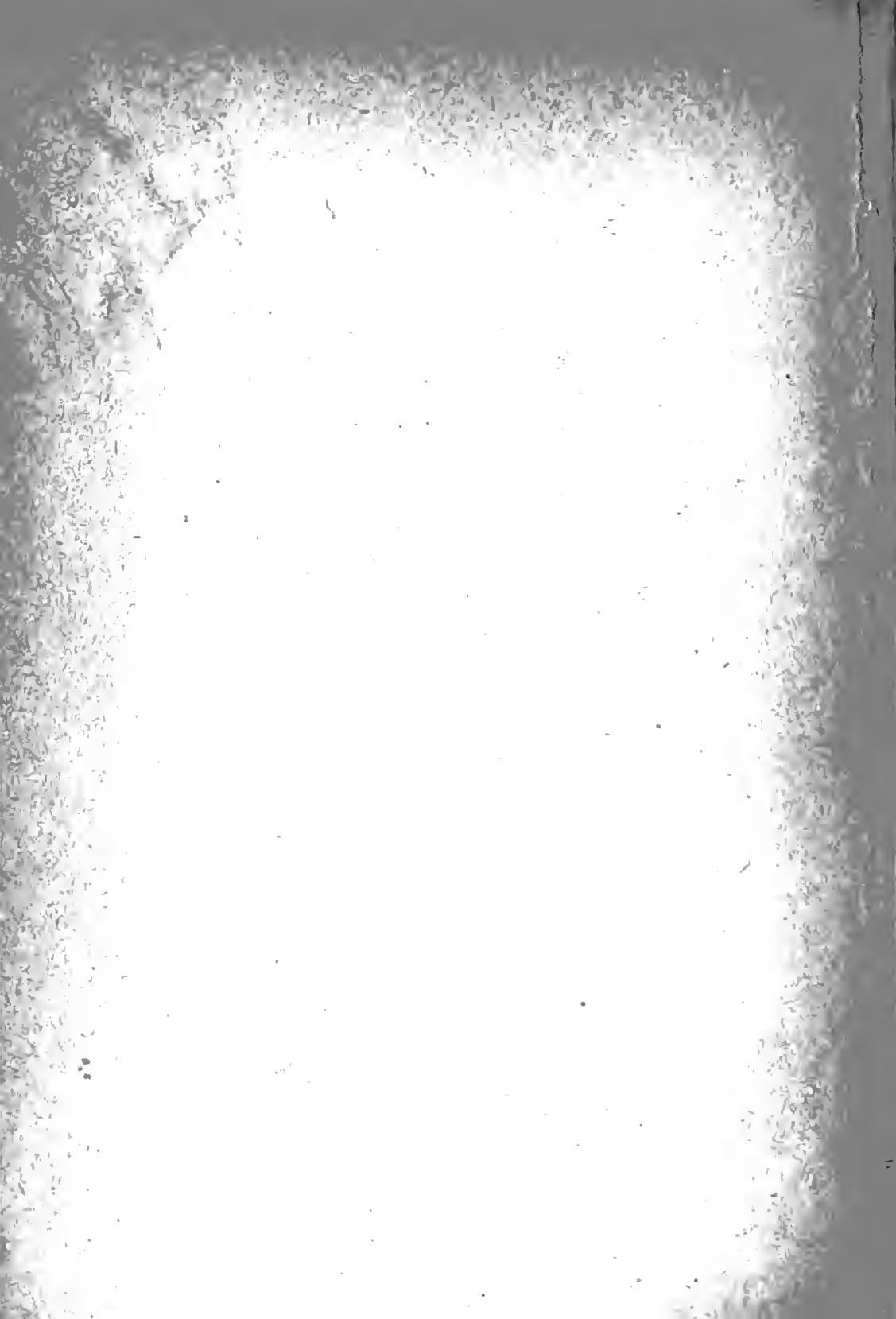
## THE BARGELLO NOW NATIONAL MUSEUM

We went yesterday forenoon to see the Bargello. I do not know anything more picturesque in Florence than the great interior court of this ancient palace of the Podestà, with the lofty height of the edifice looking down into the enclosed space, dark and stern, and the armorial bearings of a long succession of magistrates carved in stone upon the walls, a garland, as it were, of these Gothic devices extending quite round the court. The best feature of the whole is the broad stone staircase, with its heavy balustrade, ascending externally from the court to the irongrated door in the second story. We passed the sentinels under the lofty archway that communicates with the street, and went up the stairs without being questioned or impeded. At the irongrated door, however, we were met by two officials in uniform, who courteously informed us that there was nothing to be exhibited in the Bargello except an old chapel containing some frescoes by Giotto, and that these could only be seen by making a previous appointment with the custode, he not being constantly on hand. I was not sorry to escape the frescoes, though one of them is a portrait of Dante.

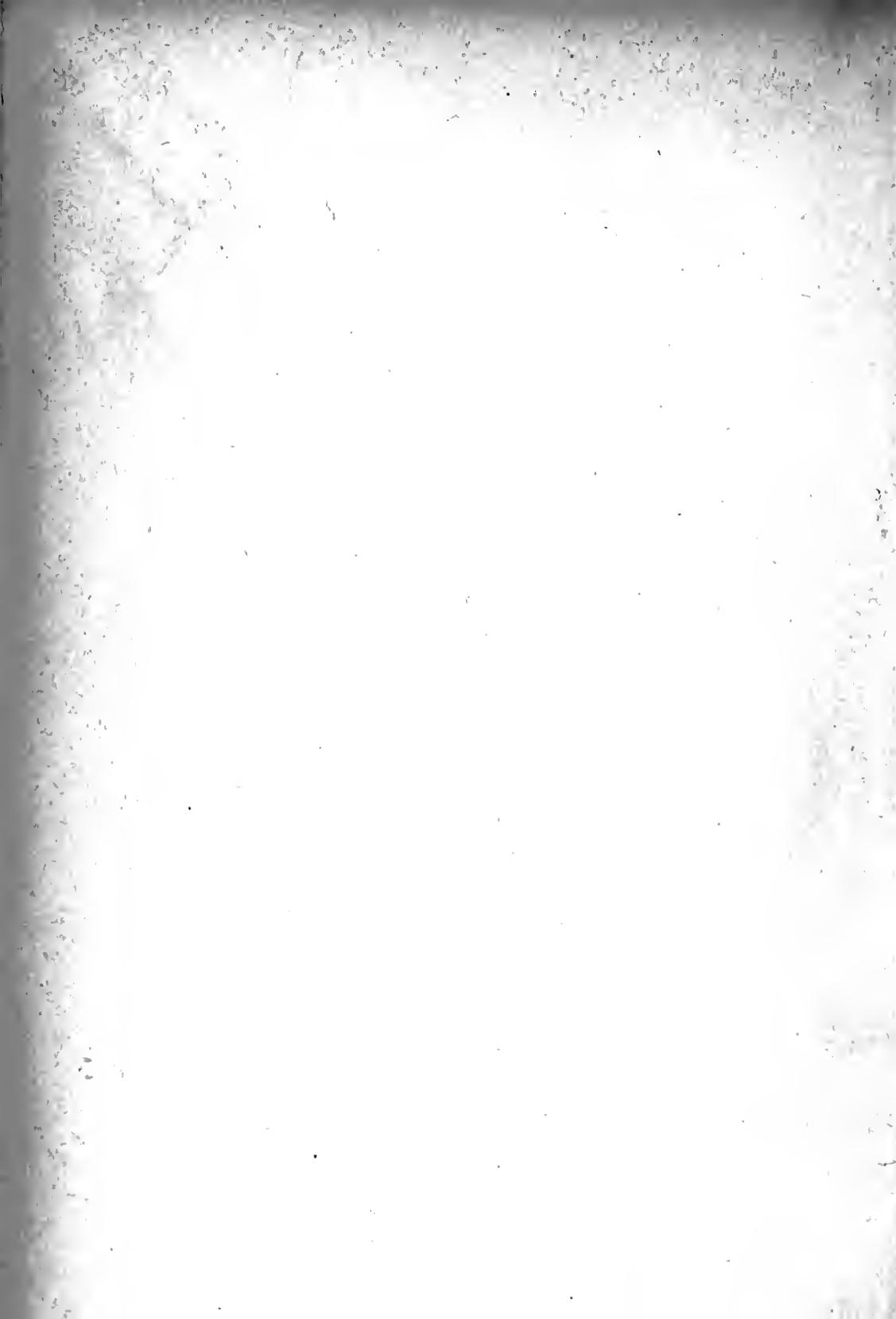
**Nathaniel Hawthorne, French  
and Italian Note-Books**

After staying a month or two at Florence the massive forms of the old palace architecture become so familiar that they are looked at, comparatively, with indifference; but I could not help thinking, as I stood contemplating this Bargello, and its still more gigantic neighbour, the Palazzo Vecchio, that if they were seen in any other part of the world, they would be considered as monstrous, both for their immensity, and the rude grandeur of their construction. All the works of Arnolfo appear, more or less, to bear the same character; and if ever the architecture of any age or country might be looked at as symbolical of its history, it surely may be this....

**Mrs. Trollope, *A visit to Italy***







## PALAZZO VECCHIO AND PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

In the midst of the city—in the Piazza of the grand Duke (Piazza della Signoria), adorned with beautiful statues and the Fountain of the Neptune—rises the Palazzo Vecchio, with its enormous overhanging battlements, and the Great tower that watches over the whole town. In its court-yard—worthy of the castle of Otranto in its ponderous gloom—is a massive staircase that the heaviest waggon and the stoutest team of horses might be driven up. Within it is a Great Saloon, faded and tarnished in its stately decorations, and moulderling by grains, but recording yet, in pictures on its walls, the triumphs of the Medici and the wars of the old Florentine people.

**Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy***

In all that concerns movement, Verrocchio was a learner from Pollaiuolo, rather than an initiator, and he probably never attained his master's proficiency....

Yet in sculpture, along with works which are valuable as harbingers of Leonardo rather than for any intrinsic perfection, he created two such masterpieces of movement as the « Child with the Dolphin » in the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio, and the « Colleoni » monument at Venice....

**Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance***

Imagine yourself again before the Palazzo Vecchio, and then you may chance to understand what I mean by saying that at right angles with it, and nothing intervening but the double line of the above mentioned porleto, stands the celebrated Loggia dei Lanzi, the glory of Andrea Orcagna and of the Grand Duke's piazza (Piazza della Signoria) and the most highly-decorated profane building in Florence.

**Mrs. Trollope, *A visit to Italy***

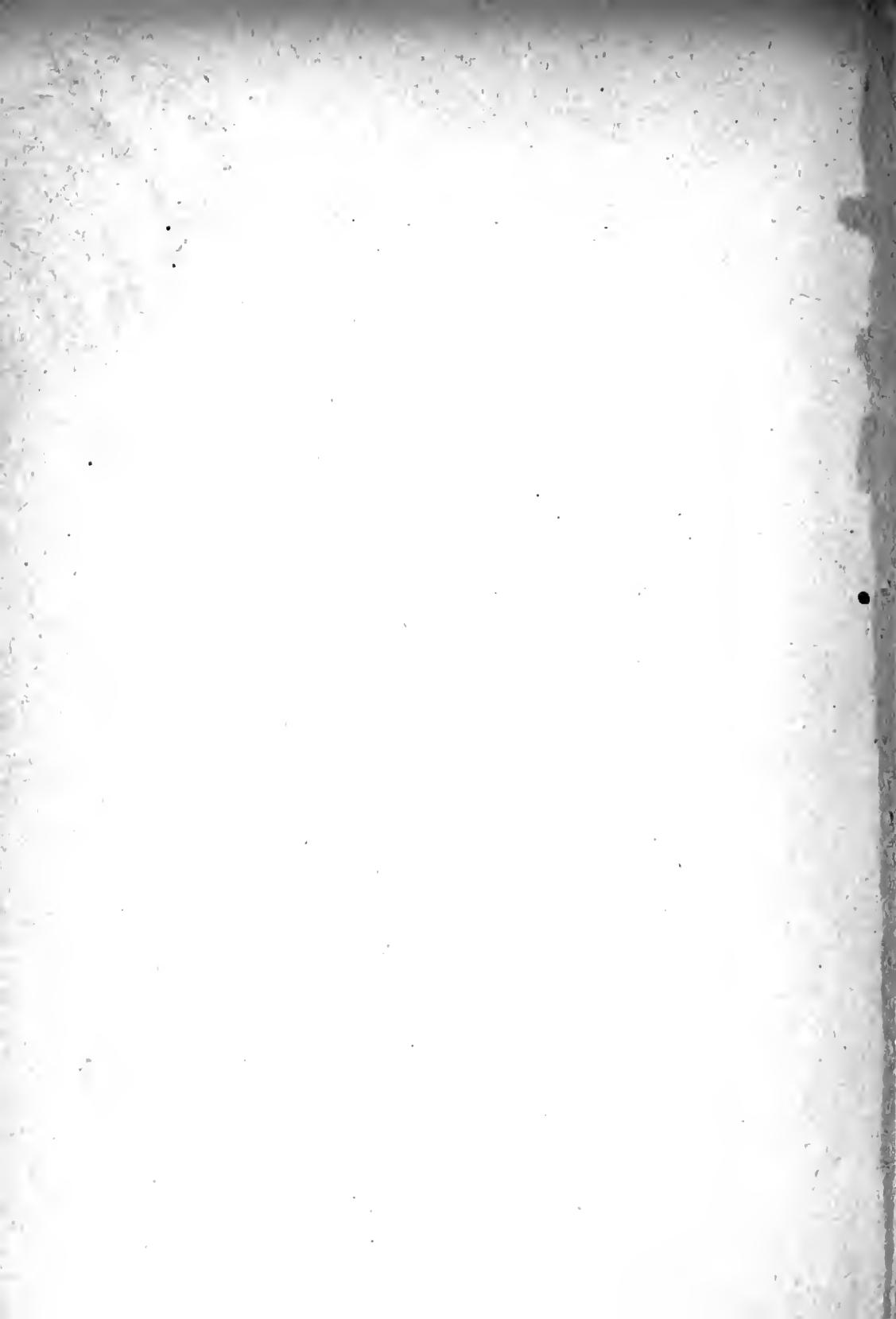
perhaps my sort of classic reverence arises more from the moderns than the ancients.... Perhaps Milton, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and our lyric Gray had more to do with my musing, than Cicero or Sallust either. The villa described by Boccaccio in the opening of the *Decameron* is on the road to it.... Now it was that I saw Florence! Dante's Florence, Galileo's Florence, Michael Angelo's Florence, the Florence of the Medici, the centre of *cinquecento* glory, and the museum of *cinquecento* art! And then, the lustrous setting of this precious gem!... the circling Apennine, with the incredible profusion of palace-like villas, that hang upon its rugged steeps, like « Jewels in an Elhiope's ear », while on the other side, the vale of Arno stretches out as far, and farther, than the eye can reach, clothed in all the richness of Italian vegetation.

**Mrs. Trollope, *A visit to Italy***

Etruscan art remains in its own Italian valleys, of the Arno and upper Tiber, in one unbroken series of work, from the seventh century before Christ, to this hour, when the country whitewasher still scratches his plaster in Etruscan pattern. All Florentine work, of the finest kind, Luca della Robbia's, Ghiberti's, Donatello's, Filippo Lippi's, Botticelli's, Fra Angelico's - is absolutely pure Etruscan, merely changing its subjects, and representing the Virgin instead of Athena, and Christ instead of Jupiter. Every line of the Florentine chisel in the fifteenth century is based on national principles of art which existed in the seventh century before Christ; and Angelico, in his convent of St. Dominic, at the foot of the hill of Fiesole, is as true an Etruscan as the builder who laid the rude stones of the wall along its crest.

**John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence***





## SAN LORENZO, THE MEDICI CHAPELS AND LAURENTIAN LIBRARY

This forenoon we have been to the church of St. Lorenzo, which stands on the site of an ancient basilica, and was itself built more than four centuries ago. The facade is still an ugly height of rough brickwork.... On the left hand of the choir is what is called the old sacristy, with the peculiarities or notabilities of which I am not acquainted. On the right hand is the new sacristy, otherwise called the Cappella dei Depositi, or Chapel of the Buried, built by Michel Angelo, to contain two monuments of the Medici family. The interior is of somewhat severe and classic architecture, the walls and pilasters being of dark stone, and surmounted by a dome, beneath which is a row of windows, quite round the building, throwing their light down far beneath upon niches of white marble....

But the statue that sits above these two latter allegories, Morning and Evening, is like no other that ever came from a sculptor's hand. It is the one work worthy of Michel Angelo's reputation, and grand enough to vindicate for him all the genius that the world gave him credit for.

**Nathaniel Hawthorne, French  
and Italian Note-Books**

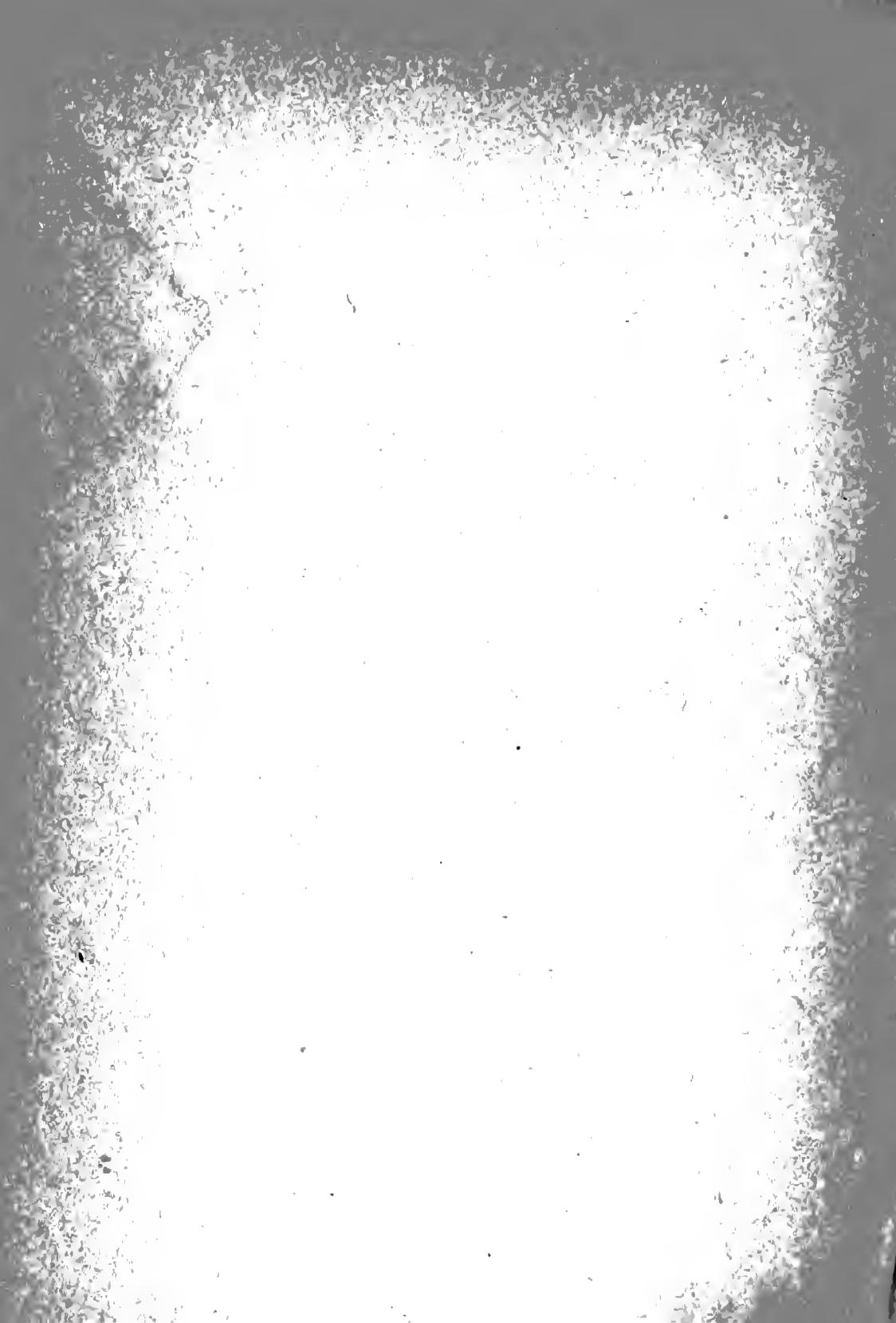
The chapel of the Medici, the Good and Bad Angels of Florence.

**Charles Dickens, Pictures from Italy**

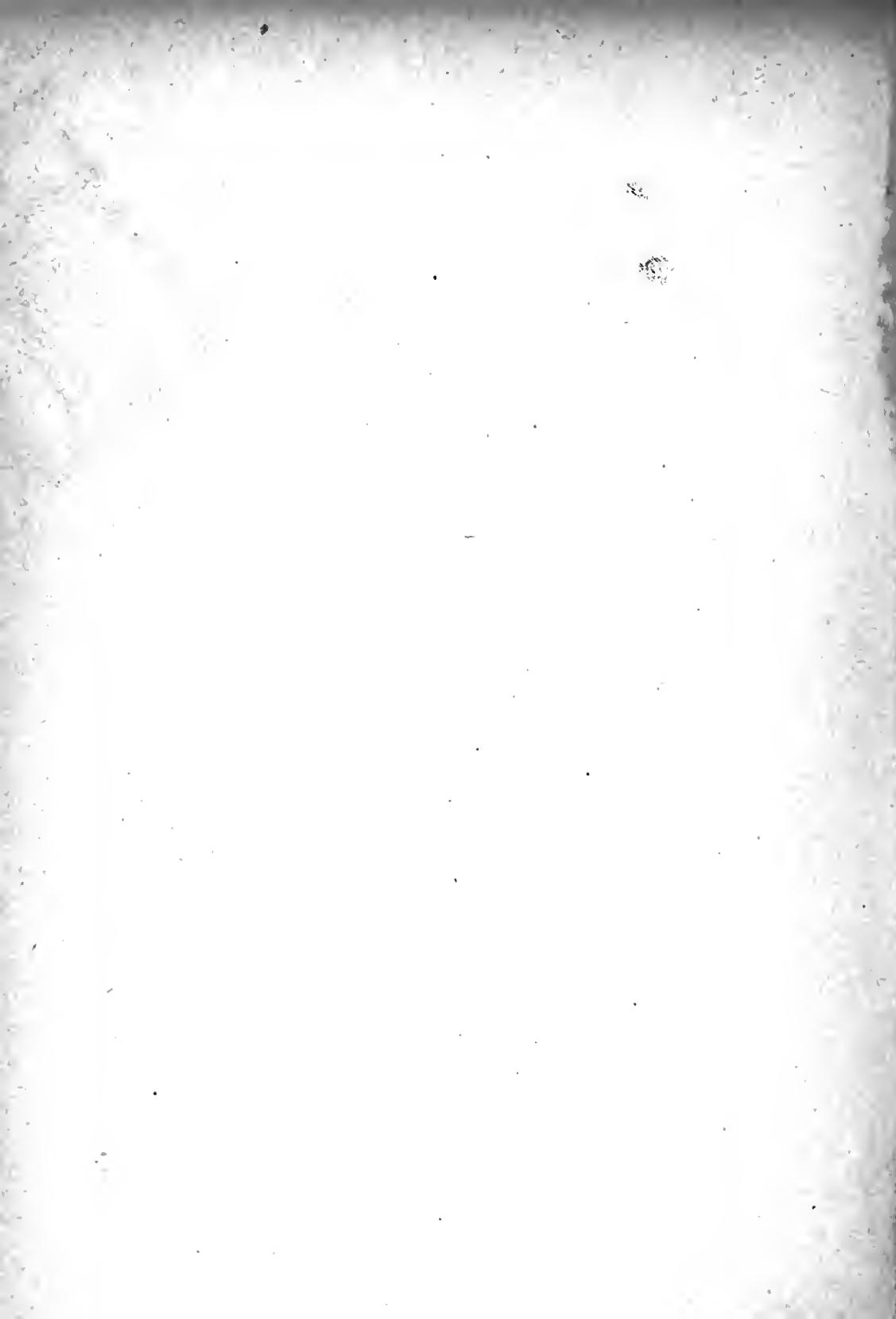
We devoted this morning to the church, chapels, and library of San Lorenzo. The church though sufficiently large and handsome, would not be remarked as pre-eminently so, among the multitude of fine churches in Florence, were it not for its connexion with two chapels of peculiar interest.... The one being the splendid mausoleum of the Medici family, originally planned by Cosmo the Old, and the second containing two of the most celebrated groups existing, from the reverenced chisel of Michael Angelo....

....From this gorgeous marble sanctuary we proceeded to the Laurentian Library, known to the book-learned throughout all ages, from its first formation to the present day, as familiarly as their own bibles and prayer-books.

**Mrs. Trollope, A visit to Italy**







## THE UFFIZI

When Jesus was born, the spirits wailed round the Mediterranean: *Pan is dead. Great Pan is dead.* And at the Renaissance the Centaur gave a final groan, and expired. At least, I seem to remember him lamenting and about to expire in the Uffizi. **D. H. Lawrence, Letters**

June 8th, 1858 — it is the most perfect collection, in a chronological series, that I have seen, comprehending specimens of all the masters since painting began to be an art. Here are Giotto, and Cimabue, and Botticelli, and Fra Angelico, and Filippo Lippi, and a hundred others, who have haunted me in churches and galleries ever since I have been in Italy, and who ought to interest me a great deal more than they do....

Once more, I deem it a pity that Protestantism should have entirely laid aside this mode of appealing to the religious sentiment....

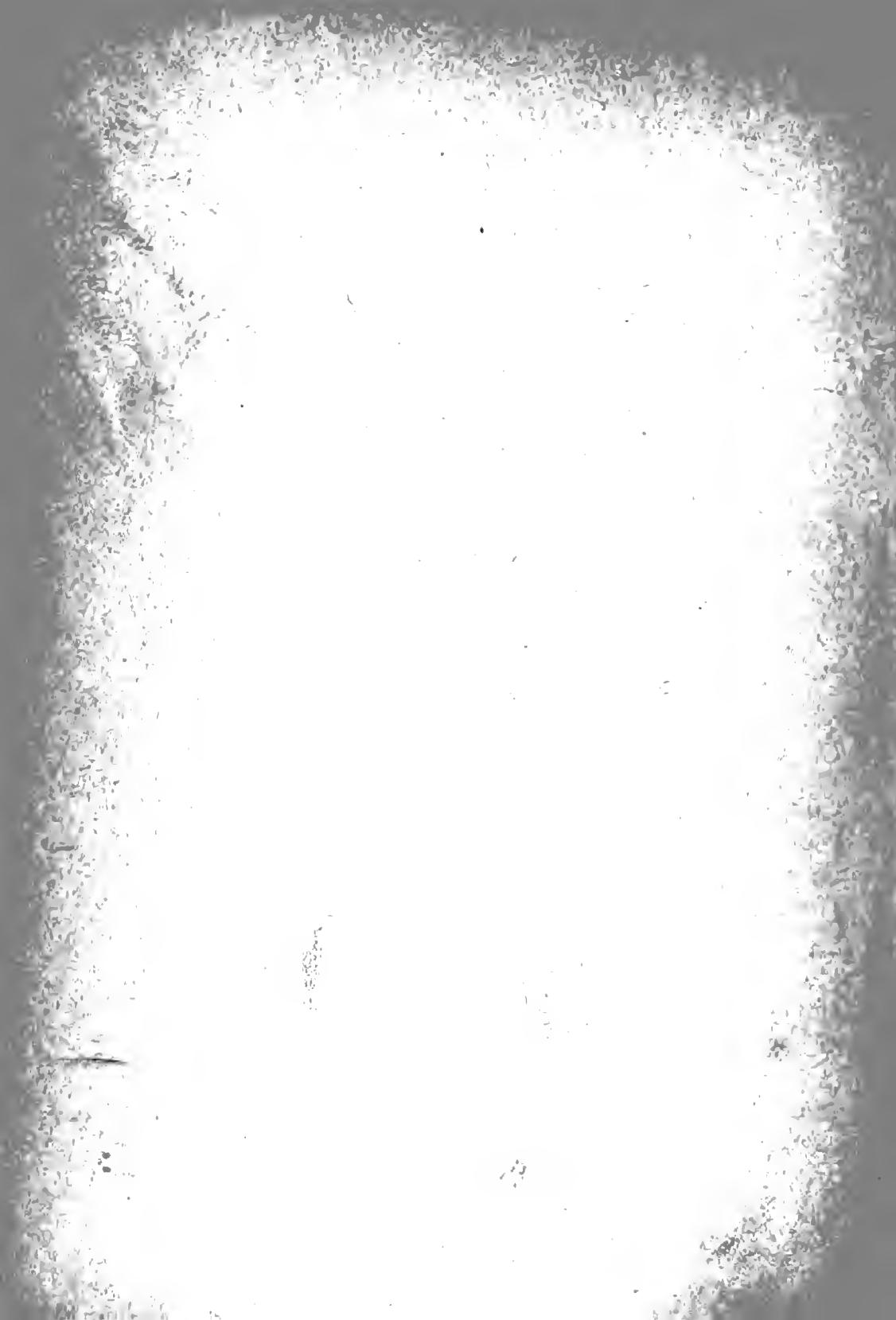
The mystery and wonder of the gallery, however — the Venus dei Medici — I could nowhere see, and indeed was almost afraid to see it; for I somewhat apprehended the extinction of another of those lights that shine along a man's pathway, and go out in a snuff the instant he comes within eyeshot of the fulfilment of his hope....

This is really a wonderful collection of pictures; and from first to last, from Giotto to the men of yesterday they are in admirable condition; and may be appreciated for all the merit that they ever possessed.

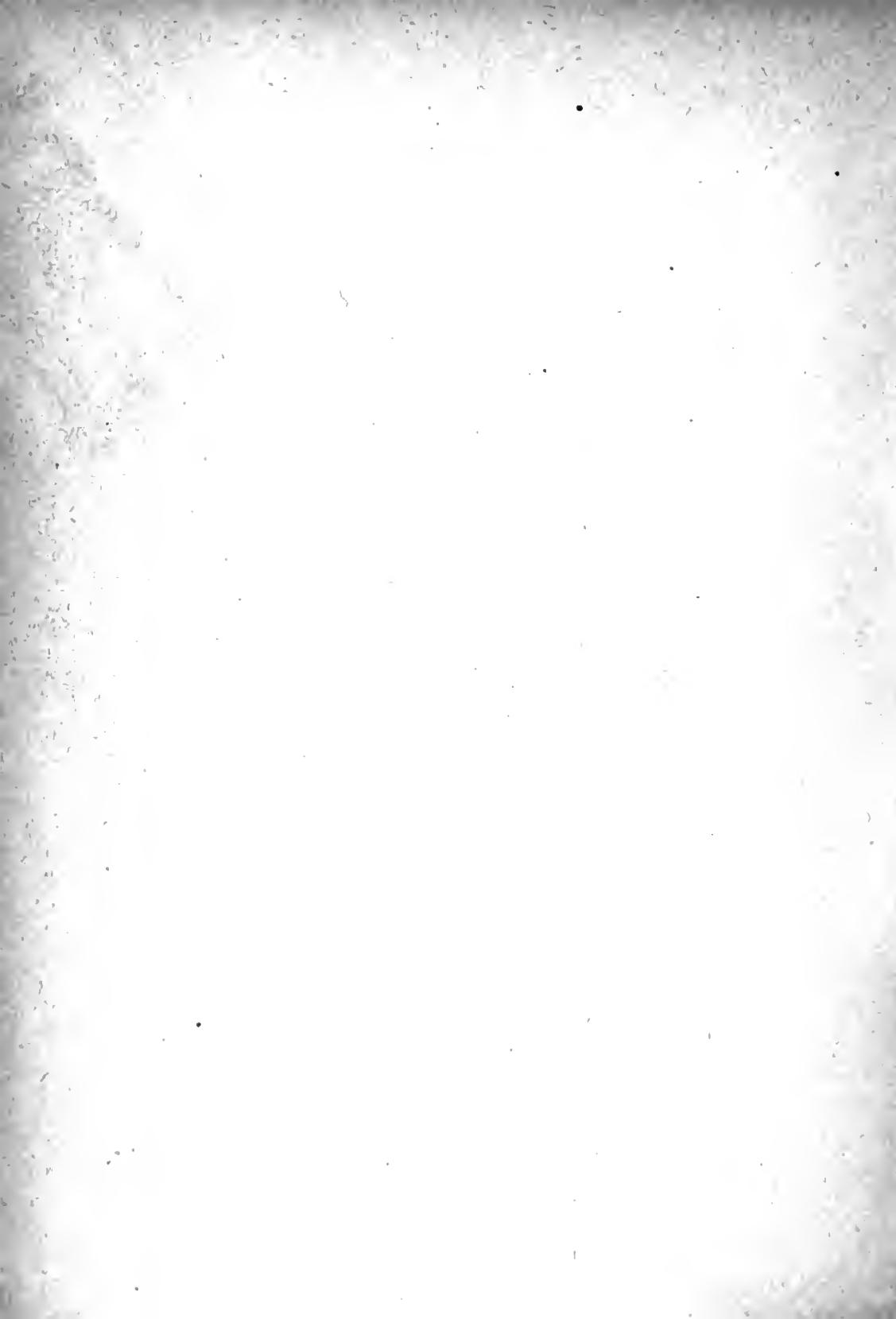
**Nathaniel Hawthorne, French  
and Italian Note-Books**

And like so many Venuses of Titian's

(The best's at Florence — see it if you will). **G. G. Byron, Beppo**







## THE PONTE VECCHIO AND HOUSES ON THE ARNO

But Arno wins us to the fair white walls,  
Where the Etrurian Athens claims and keeps  
A softer feeling for her fairy halls.  
Girt by her theater of hills, she reaps  
Her corn, and wine, and oil, and Plenty leaps  
To laughing life, with her redundant horn.  
Along the banks where smiling Arno sweeps  
Was modern Luxury of Commerce born,  
And buried Learning rose, redeem'd to a new morn.

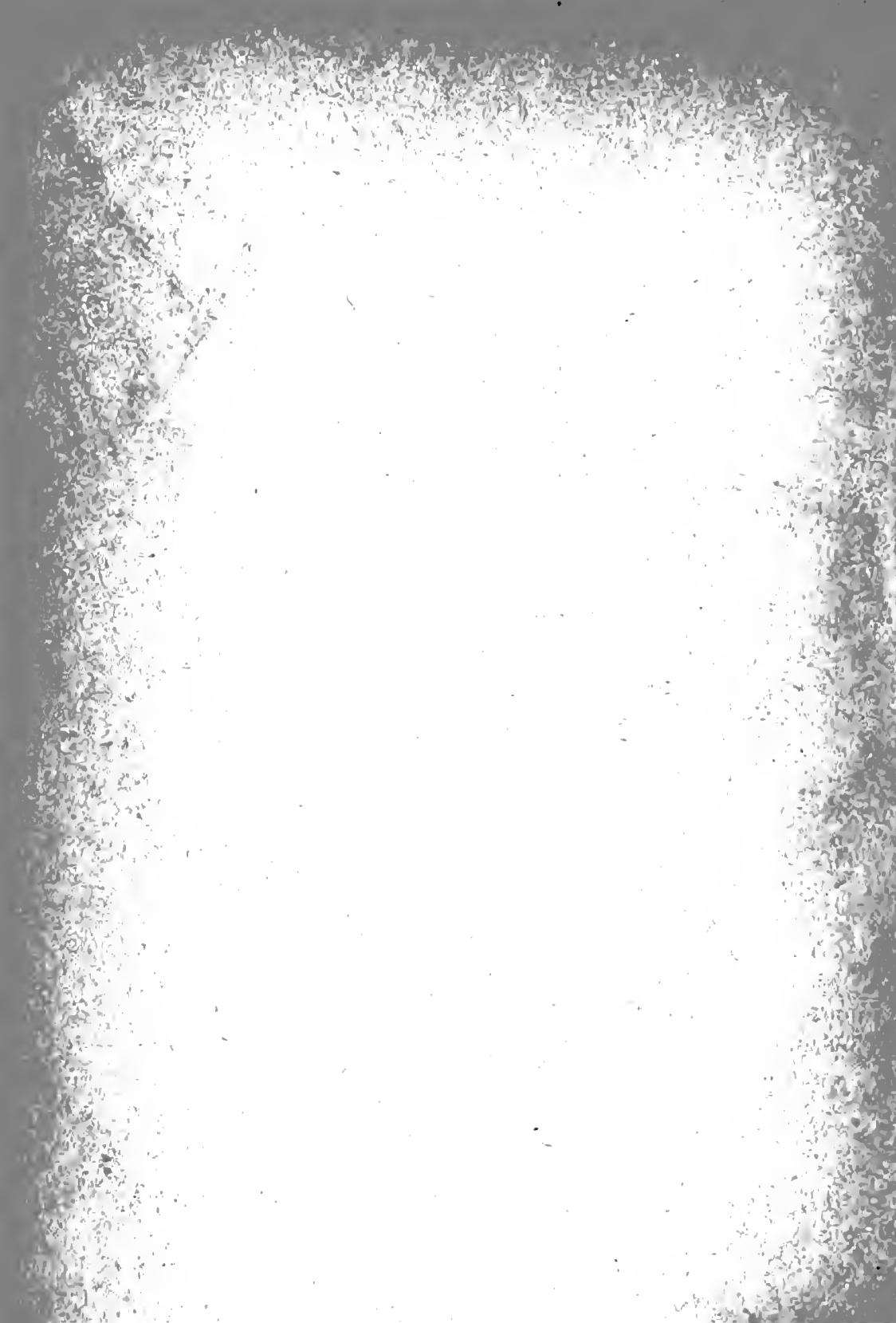
**G. G. Byron, *Childe Harold***

On quitting the Countess she took her way to the Lung'Arno, the sunny quay beside the yellow river, where the bright-faced hotels familiar to tourists stand all in a row. She had learned her way before this through the streets of Florence, and was therefore able to turn with great decision of step out of the little square which forms the approach to the bridge of the Holy Trinity. She proceeded to the left, towards the Ponte Vecchio, and stopped in front of one of the hotels which overlook that delightful structure.

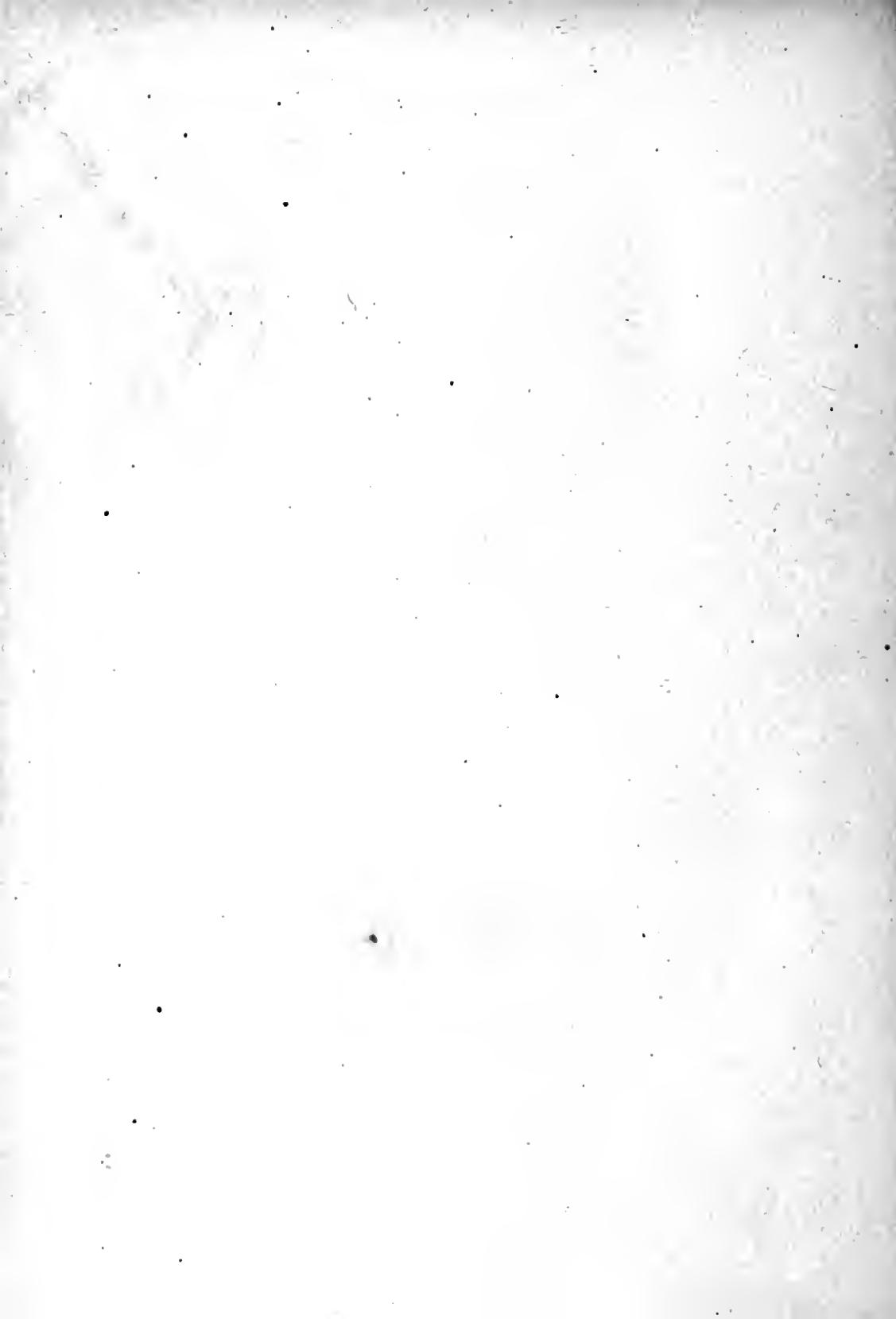
**Henry James, *The portrait of a lady***

This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence....

**P. B. Shelley, *Ode to the West Wind***







## VILLA DI BELLOSGUARDO

Mr. Lytton had a reception on the terrace of his villa at Bellosguardo the evening before our last in Florence, and we were all bachelors together there, and I made tea, and we ate strawberries and cream and talked spiritualism through one of the pleasantest two hours that I remember. Such a view! Florence dissolving in the purple of the hills; and the stars looking on.

Mr. Tennyson was there, Ms. Powers, and Mr. Villari, an accomplished Sicilian, besides our young host and ourselves (1853).

**Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, *Letters***

'I found a house at Florence on the hill  
Of Bellosguardo'. Tis a tower which keeps  
A post of double observation o'er  
That valley of Arno (holding as a hand  
The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole  
And Mount Morello and the setting sun,  
The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,  
Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups  
Turned red to the brim because their wine is red.  
No sun could die nor yet be born ~~unseen~~  
By dwellers at my villa: morn and eve  
Were magnified before us in the pure  
Illimitable space and pause of sky,  
Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,  
Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall  
Of the garden drops the mystic floating grey  
Of olive trees (with interruptions green  
From maize and vine), until'tis caught and torn  
Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses  
Which signs the way to Florence. Beautiful

The city lies along the ample vale,  
Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street,  
The river trailing like a silver cord  
Through all, and curling loosely, both before  
And after, over the whole stretch of land  
Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes  
With farms and villas'. **E. Barrett-Browning, Aurora Leigh**

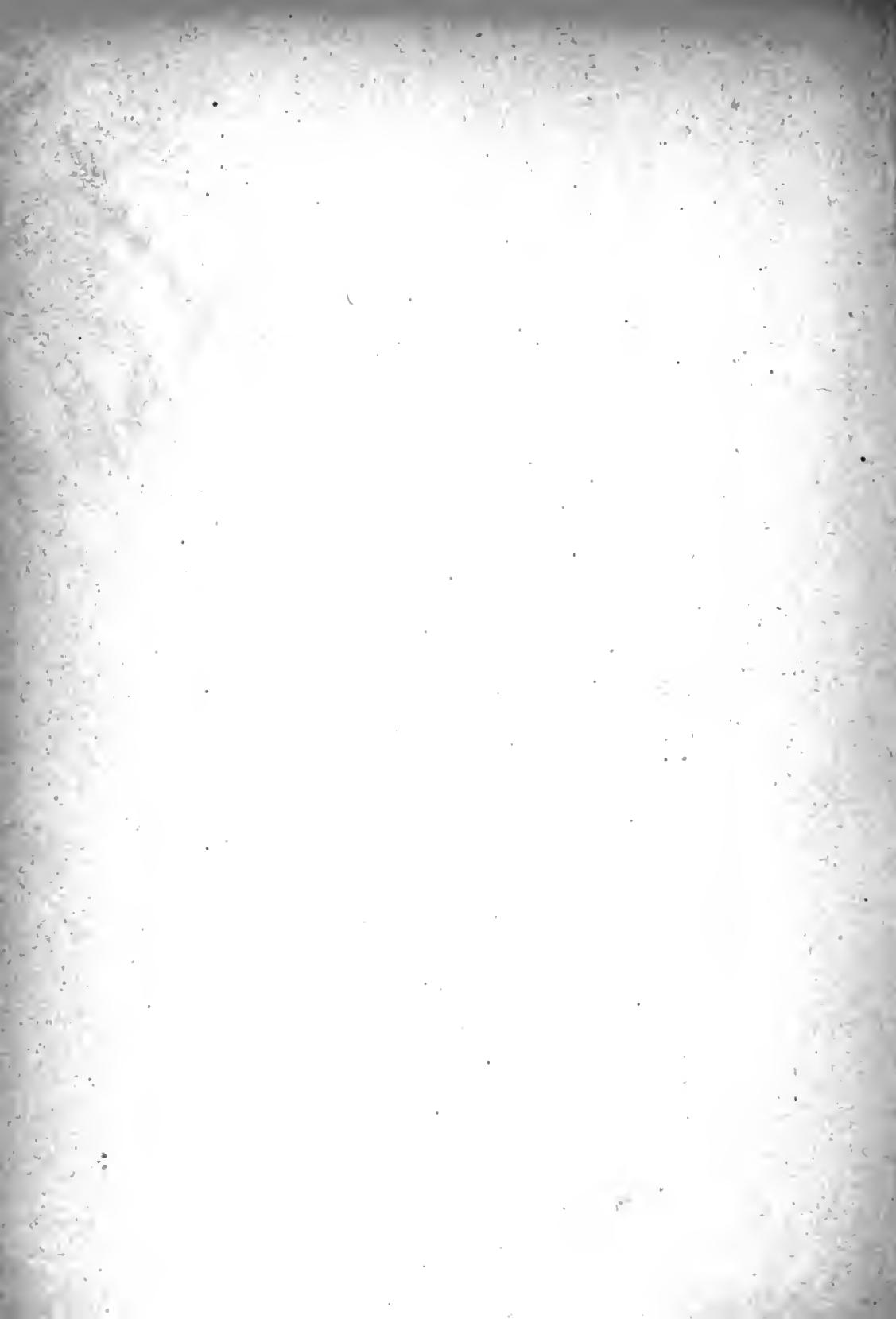
*June 21st*- Last evening, we went to pass the evening with Miss Blagden, who inhabits a villa at Bellosguardo, about a mile outside of the walls (1). The situation is very lofty, and there are good views from every window of the house, and an especially fine one of Florence and the hills beyond, from the balcony of the drawing-room. By-and-by came Mr. Browning, Mr. Trollope, Mr. Boott and his young daughter, and two or three other gentlemen....

I conversed principally with Mr. Trollope, the son, I believe, of the Mrs. Trollope to whom America owes more for her shrewd criticisms than we are ever likely to repay. Mr. Trollope is a very sensible and cultivated man, and, I suspect, an author: at least, there is a literary man of repute of this name, though I have never read his works. He has resided in Italy eighteen years. It seems a pity to do this. It needs the native air to give life a reality (1858).

**Nathaniel Hawtowne, French  
and Italian Note-Books**

(1) "Not exactly Aurora Leigh's", writes El. Barrett to Mrs. Johnson (1857).





## SANTA CROCE AND DANTE'S MONUMENT

In Santa Croce's holy precincts lie  
Ashes which make it holier, dust which is  
Even in itself an immortality,  
Though there were nothing save the past, and this  
The particle of those sublimities  
Which have relapsed to chaos: here repose  
Angelo's, Alfieri's bones, and his,  
The starry Galileo, with his woes;  
Here Machiavelli's earth return'd to whence it rose.  
These are four minds, which, like the elements,  
Might furnish forth creation — Italy!

**G. G. Byron, *Childe Harold***

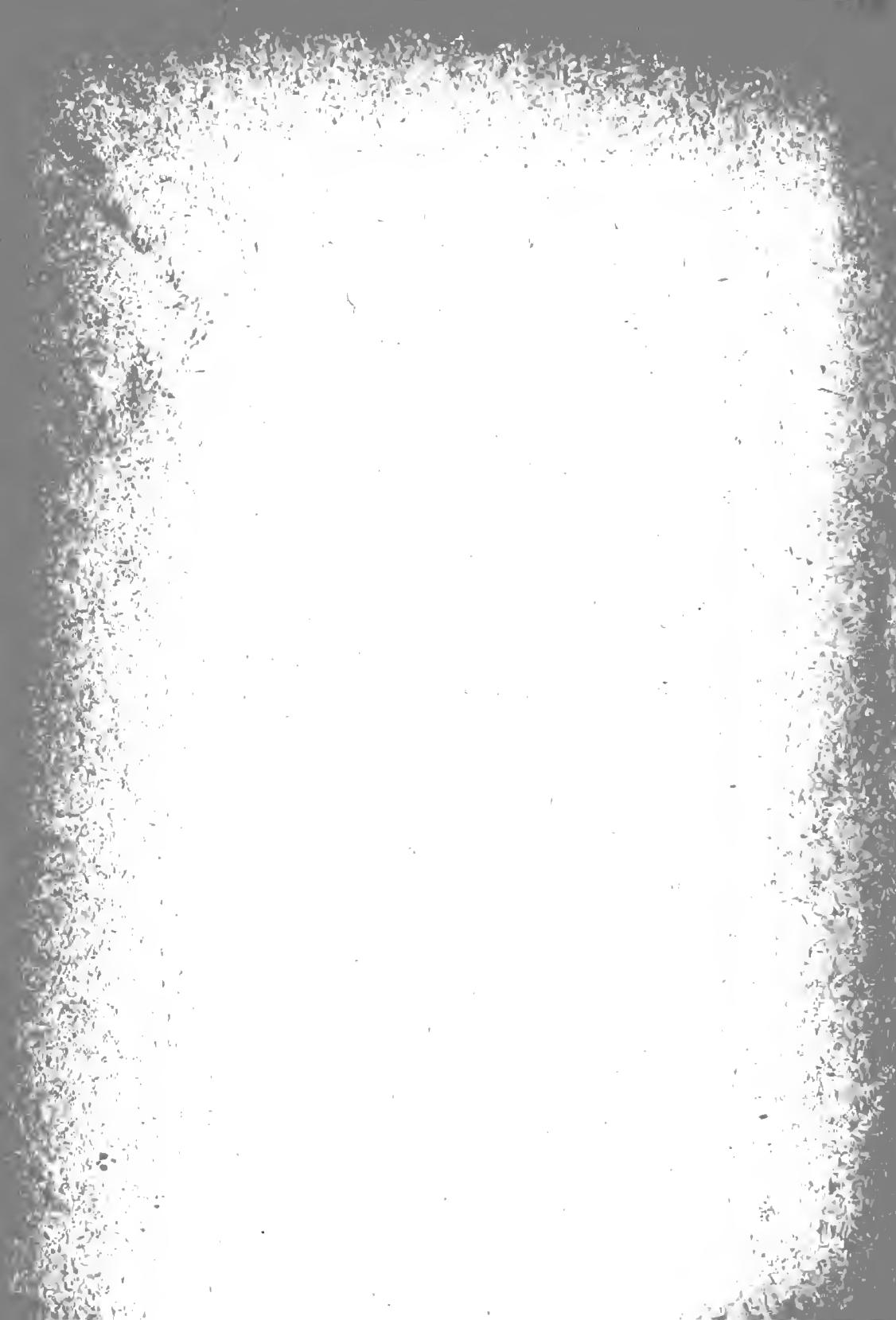
....the church of Santa Croce where Michael Angelo lies buried, and where every stone in the cloisters is eloquent on great men's deaths....

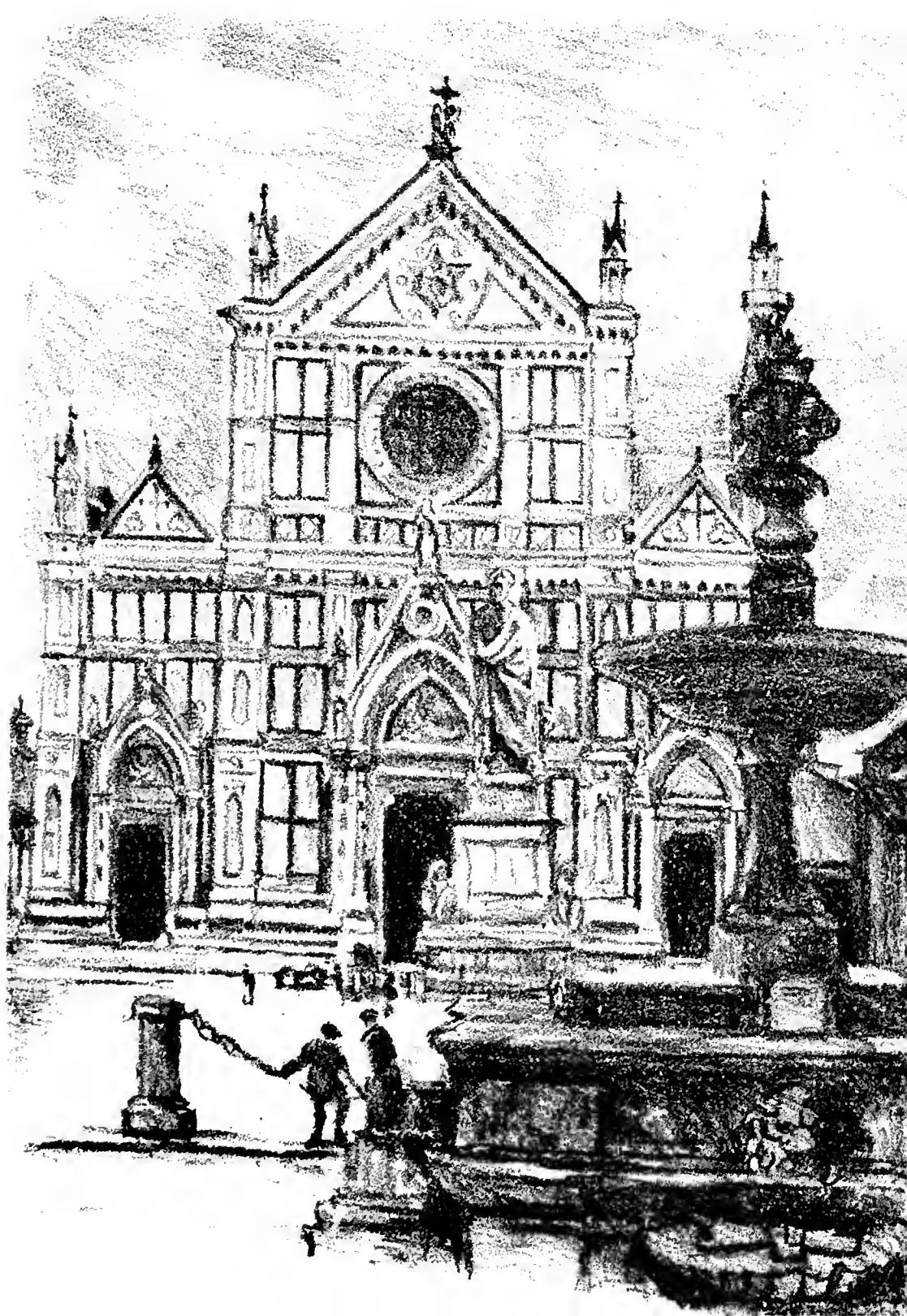
**Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy***

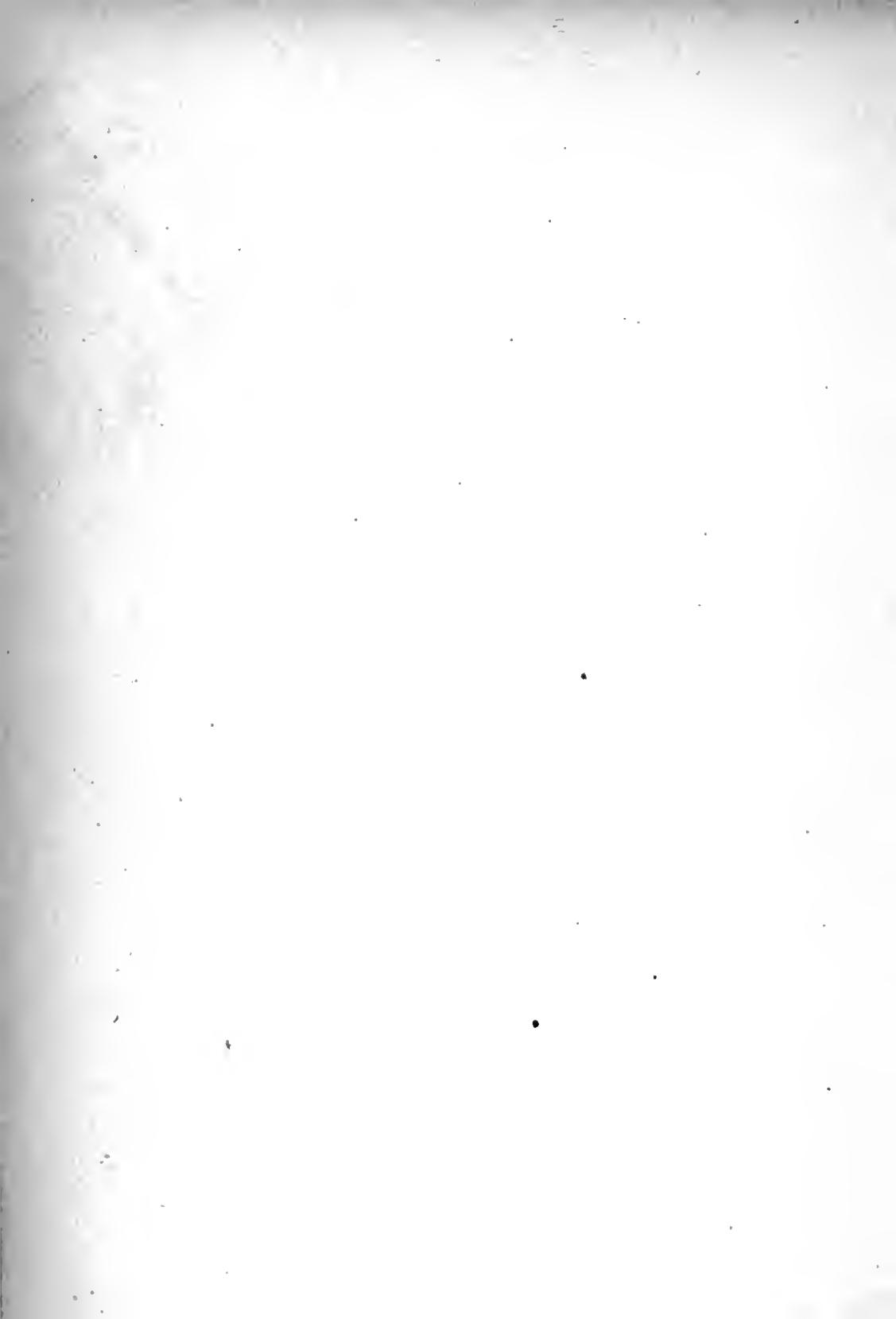
The first of the great personalities in Florentine painting was Giotto. Although he affords no exception to the rule that the great Florentines exploited all the arts in the endeavour to express themselves, he, Giotto renowned as architect and sculptor, reputed as wit and versifier, differed from the most of his Tuscan successors in having peculiar aptitude for the essential in painting *as an art*....

....Witness the resurrected frescoes in Santa Croce at Florence!

**Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance***







## SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

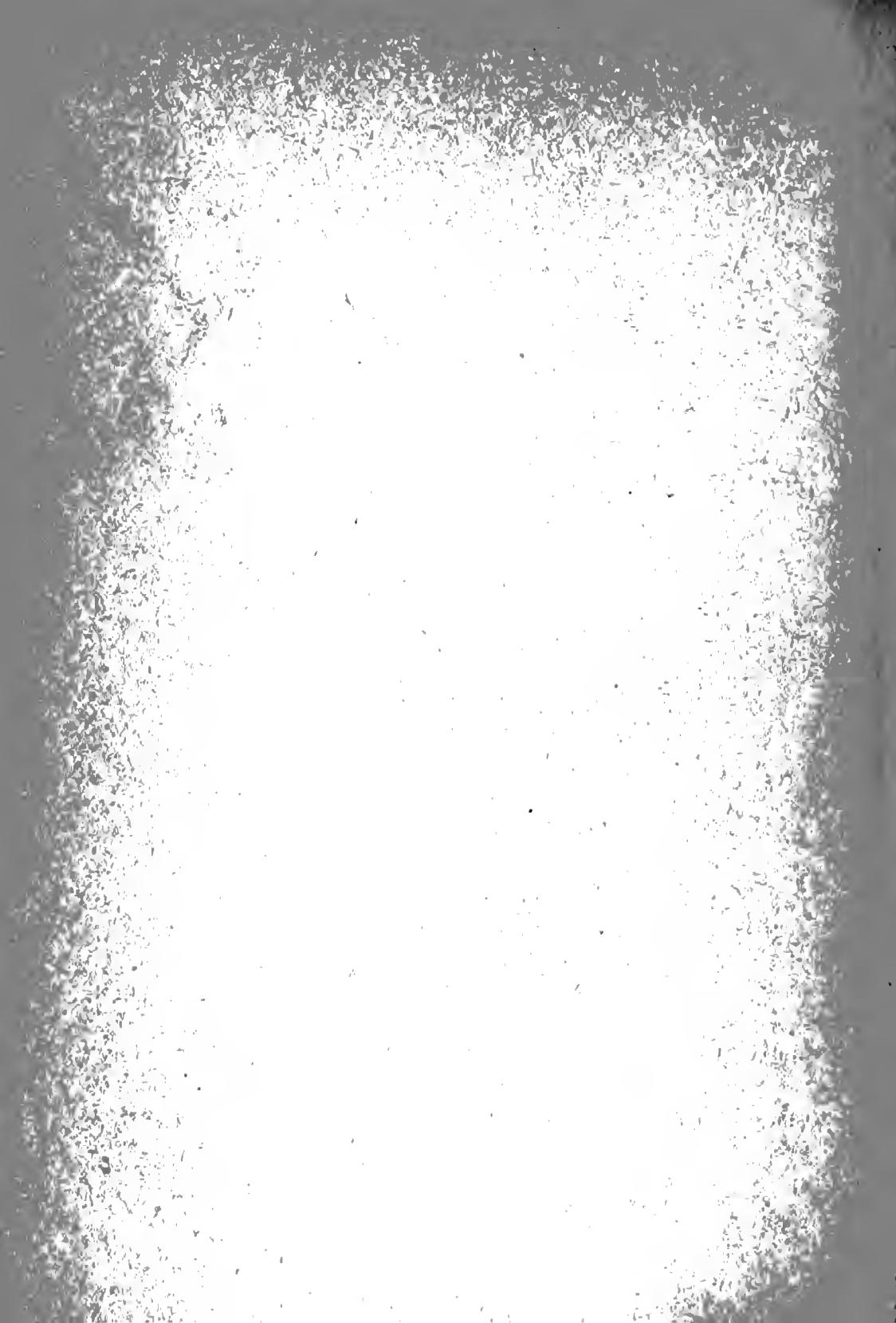
Or enter, in your Florence wanderings,  
Santa Maria Novella church. You pass  
The left stair, where, at plague-time, Macchiavel  
Saw one with set fair face as in a glass,  
Dressed out against the fear of death and hell,  
Rustling her silks in pauses of the mass,  
To keep the thought off how her husband fell,  
When she left home, stark dead across her feet.  
The stair leads up to what Orgagna gave  
Of Dante's daemons; but you, passing it,  
Ascend the right stair of the farther nave.  
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit  
By Cimabue's Virgin.

**Elis. Barrett Browning, *Casa Guidi Windows***

....return to the Green Cloister of S.ta Maria Novella; and place ourselves on the south side of it, so as to see as much as you can of the entrance, on the opposite side, to the so-called « Spanish Chapel ».

....You will begin to wonder that human daring ever achieved anything so magnificent.

**John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence***







## DANTE'S HOUSE AND THE TORRE DELLA CASTAGNA

**B**etween the two central points of the city—the great public square surrounding the Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of government so to speak, where all public business was transacted, and the other square in which now rises the cathedral—lies an obscure little opening among the thronging houses, in which the little old homely church of San Martino still stands, and where in the thirteenth century the houses of the Alighieri stood. An old doorway opposite, almost the only remnant of the original house, which is still used for homely, every day purposes; shows where the « *Divino Poeta* » was born....

The Portinari, the Donati, the Cerehli, inhabited each their palace-colony, their homely fortress, side by side with the Alighieri. They were neighbours in the most absolute form of the word. Impossible to know each other more closely, to be more completely aware of each others' defects and weaknesses, of each others' virtues and good qualities, than were the generations which succeeded each other in the same hates and friendships as in the same names and houses. Thus the boy Durante, Alighieri's son, no doubt knew from his cradle not only Folco Portinari's little Beatrice, but also the young Donati, Forese, and Piccarda, and probably that Gemma of whom he leaves no record through she was his wife. That little corner of the closely-inhabited mediaeval city was in itself an *Imperium in imperio*.

**Mrs. Oliphant, *The Makers of Florence***

....This is Dante: so he looks, this « voice of ten silent centuries », and sings us « his mystic unfathomable song » .... He was born at Florence, in the upper class of society, in the year 1265.... .... his *Divine Comedy*, the most remarkable of all modern books, is the result....

Yes, truly, it is a great thing for a Nation that it get an articulate voice; that it produce a man who speak forth melodiously what the heart

it means! Italy, for example, poor Italy lies dismembered, scattered asunder, not appearing in any protocol or treaty as a unity at all; yet the noble Italy is actually *one*: Italy produced its Dante: Italy can speak! (1840).

**Thomas Carlyle, *The hero as a poet***

O star of morning and of liberty!  
O bringer of the light, whose splendour shines  
Above the darkness of the Apennines,  
Forerunner of the day that is to be!  
The voices of the city and the sea,  
The voices of the mountains and the pines,  
Repeat thy song till the familiar lines  
Are the footpaths for the thought of Italy!  
Thy fame is blown abroad from all the heights,  
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,  
As of a mighty wind, and men devout  
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,  
In their own language hear thy wondrous word,  
And many are amazed and many doubt.

**H. W. Longfellow, *Divina Commedia***

The writer of the following lines died at Florence.... His life was singular... The present poem like the « Vita Nuova » of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers.... The first stanza is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous Canzone *Voi, ch'intendendo il terzo ciel moveste,*

**P. B. Shelley, *Epipschydion*  
(To Emilia Viviani, Florentine)**





## PIAZZA SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA AND FERDINANDO DE MEDICI'S STATUE

*The statue and the bust*

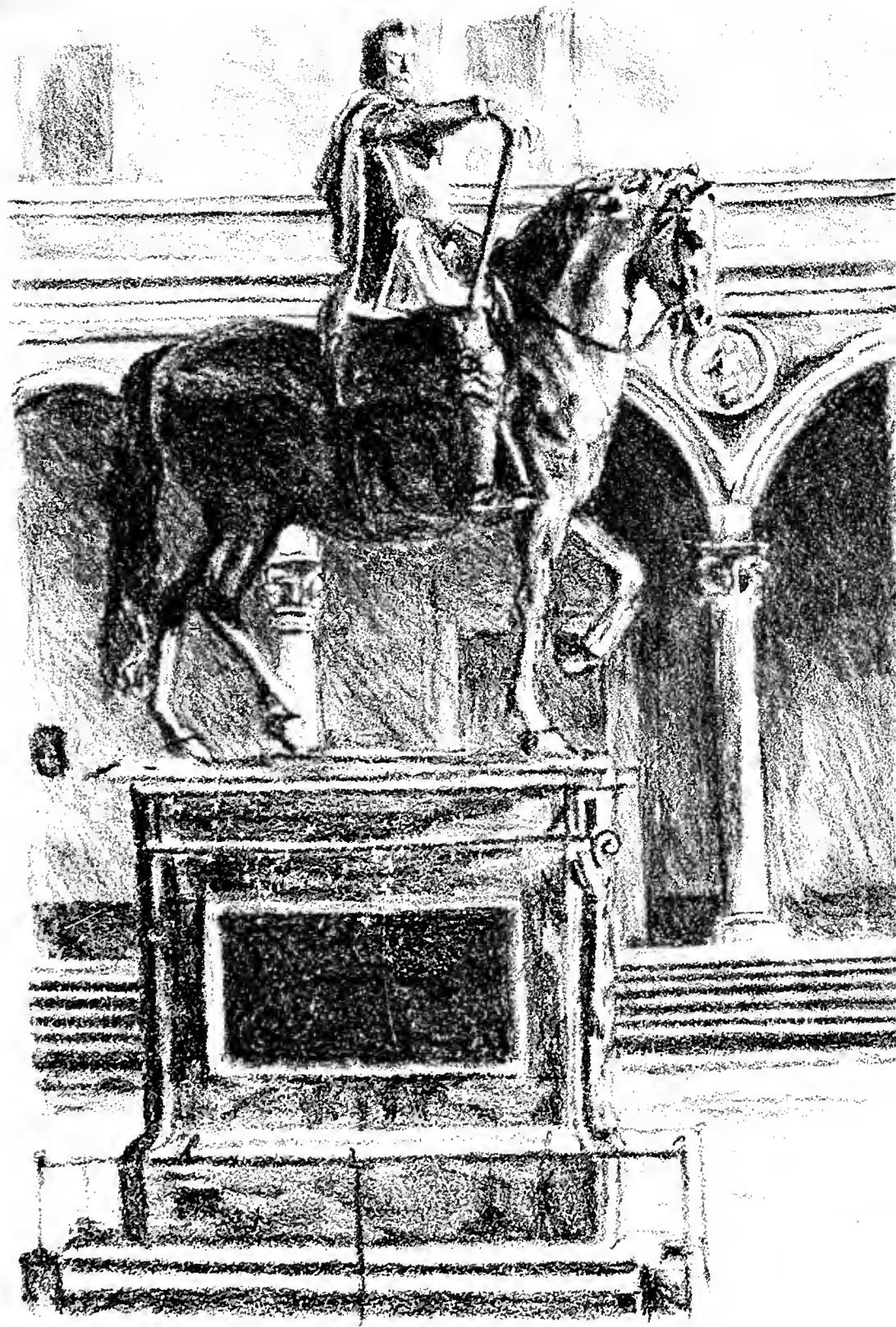
**T**here's a palace in Florence, the world knows well;  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

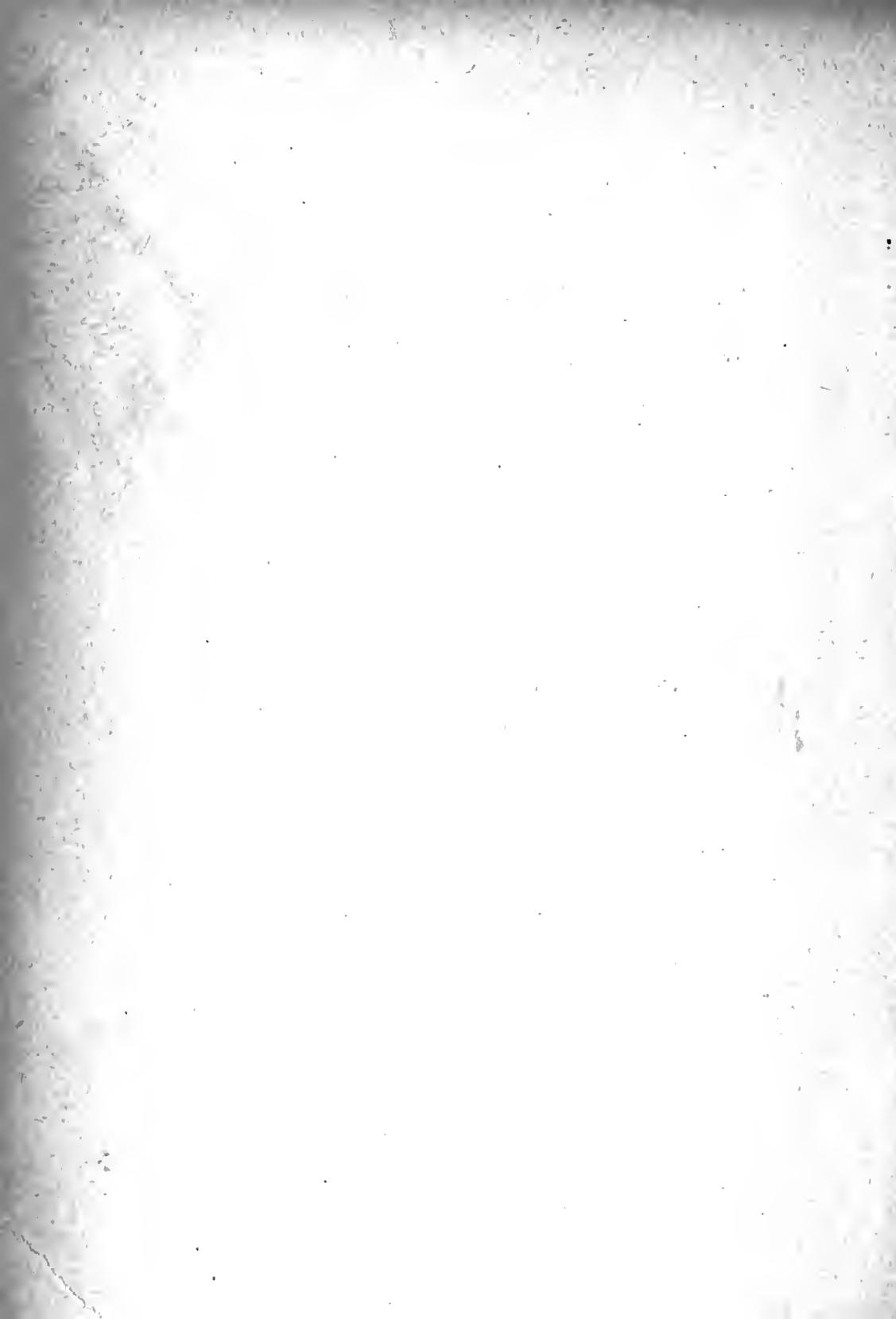
Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the farthest window facing the east  
Asked, « Who rides by with the royal air? »

The brides-maids' prattle around her ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride increased-  
They felt by its beats her heart expand -  
As one at each ear and both in a breath  
Whispered, « The Great-Duke Ferdinand ».

**Robert Browning, Poetical Works**

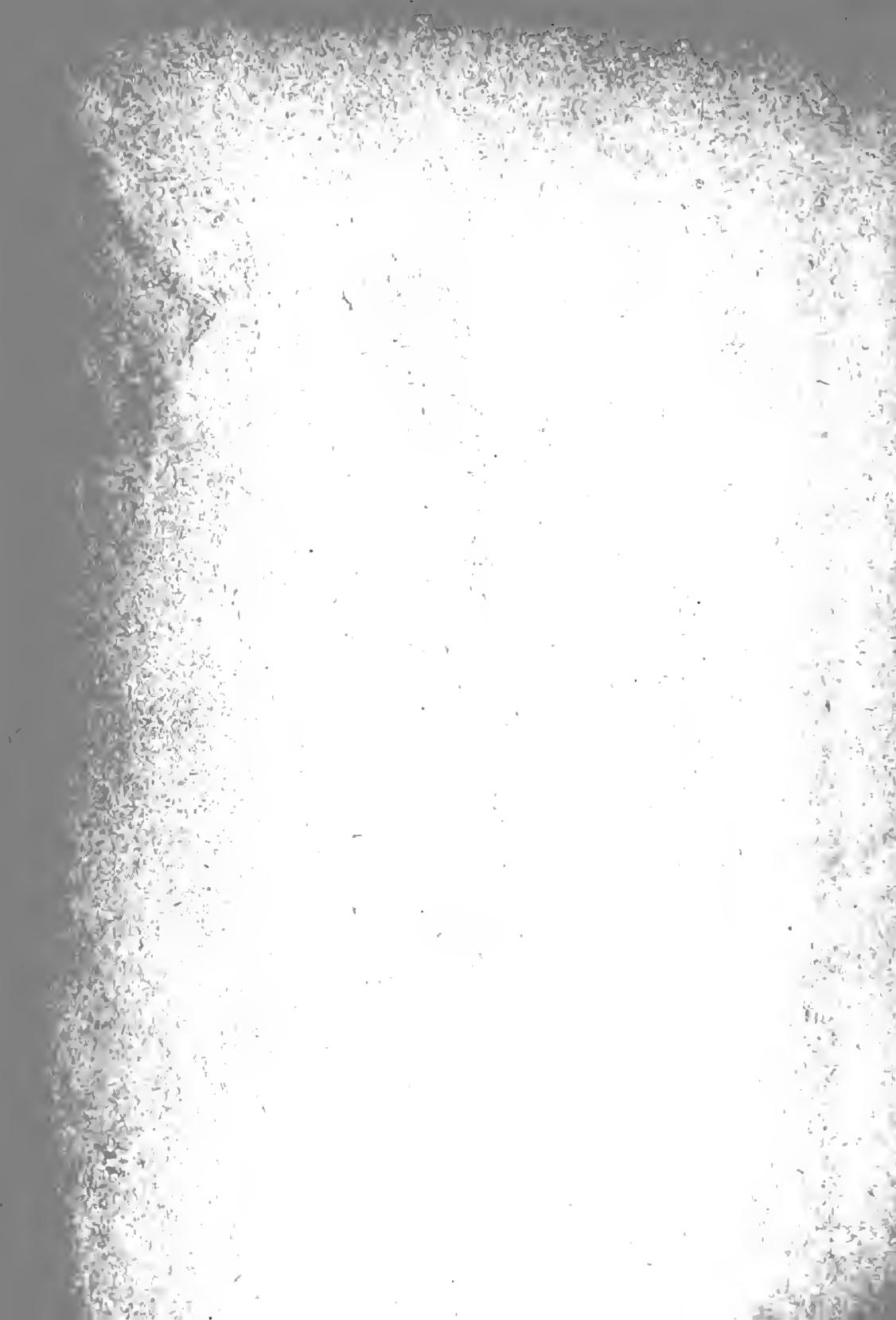






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